

How Prophecy Works

A Study of the Semantic Field of נביא and a Close Reading
of Jeremiah 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17

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Abstract

There is a longstanding scholarly debate on the nature of prophecy in ancient Israel. Until now, no study has based itself on the semantics of the Hebrew lexeme *nābîʾ* ('prophet'). In this investigation, I discuss the nature and function of prophecy in the corpus of the Hebrew book of Jeremiah. I analyse all occurrences of *nābîʾ* in Jeremiah and perform a close reading of three primary texts, Jeremiah 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17. The result is a detailed explanation of how prophecy works, and what it meant to call someone a *nābîʾ* in ancient Israel.

Chapter one introduces the work and surveys the main trends in the research literature on prophecy. First I describe scholarly constructs and definitions of the phenomenon of prophecy. I then survey contemporary debates over the meaning of *nābîʾ* and the problem of 'false' prophecy. I also describe the methods, structure, corpus and aims of the investigation.

In part one, I take all the occurrences of the lexeme *nābîʾ* in Jeremiah and analyse its relations to other words (syntagmatics and paradigmatics). For *nābîʾ*, the conceptual fields of communication and worship are significant. There is also a close semantic relation between *nābîʾ* and *kōhēn* ('priest').

Part two analyses prophecy in the literary context of three key texts. Chapter three is a close reading of Jeremiah 1.4–19. Chapter four is a close reading of Jeremiah 23.9–40. Chapter five is a close reading of Jeremiah 27.1–28.17. In my analysis I situate these passages in the wider context of an ancient cultural worldview on divine communication. This brings to light the importance of legitimacy and authority as themes in prophecy.

Chapter six concludes the work. I combine the results of the semantic analysis and close readings with conclusions for six main areas of study: (1) the function and nature of prophecy; (2) dreams and visions; (3) being sent; (4) prophets, priests and cult; (5) salvation and doom; and (6) legitimacy and authority. These conclusions explain the conceptual categories related to *nābîʾ* in the corpus. I then situate these findings in two current debates, one on the definition of *nābîʾ* and one on cultic prophecy.

This thesis contributes to critical scholarship on prophecy in the ancient world, on the book of Jeremiah, and on prophets in ancient Israel. It is the first major study to ana-

lyse *nābî* based on its semantic associations. It adds to a growing consensus which understands prophecy as a form of divination. Contrary to some trends in Jeremiah scholarship, this work demonstrates the importance of a close reading of the Masoretic (Hebrew) text. This study uses a method of a general nature which can be applied to other texts. Thus there are significant implications for further research on prophecy and prophetic literature.

For Jackie

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Declaration

I hereby affirm that I have composed this thesis, that it does not exceed 100,000 words, that it is my own work, and that I have not submitted it for any other degree or professional qualification.

William L. Kelly
Candidate

Date

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Abbreviations

All abbreviations used in this work are drawn from Schwertner, *IATG3. Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete*, 3., überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage, Berlin, 2014, and Collins, Buller and Kutsko, dir., *The SBL Handbook of Style*, 2nd ed., Atlanta, GA, 2014. Citations of scholarly literature in the footnotes are given in an abbreviated form; full references are found in the bibliography. For matters of bibliographic style, I have consulted primarily the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Sigla for texts and versions follow those found in BHS, pp. xlvii–li. Unless indicated otherwise, all biblical citations refer to the Masoretic (Hebrew) version in BHS, and all translations of ancient texts into English are my own. For the reader's convenience, I have provided below a select list of abbreviations indicating text editions consulted and frequently cited works.

א	Arabic version. See Walton, <i>Biblia Sacra polyglotta</i> , 2 vols., Londinensis, 1657.
ABD	Freedman, ed., <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , 6 vols., New York, 1992.
AHw	Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> , 3 Bände, Wiesbaden, 1965–81.
Alonso Schökel	Alonso Schökel, ed., <i>Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español</i> , edición preparada por V. Morla y V. Collado, 2a edición, Madrid, 1999.
ARM 26/1	Durand, <i>Archives épistolaires de Mari</i> , ARM 26/1, Paris, 1988.
ATTM	Beyer, <i>Aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer</i> , 2 Bände, Göttingen, 1984–2004.
Bauer-Leander	Bauer and Leander, <i>Historische Grammatik</i> , Halle, 1922.
BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon</i> , corrected reprint ed., Oxford, 1966.
Ben Yehuda	Ben Yehuda, <i>Thesaurus totius Hebraeae</i> , reprint, 8 vols., New York, 1960.
BHS	Elliger and Rudolph, eds., <i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i> , editio funditus renovata, Textum Masoreticum curavit H. P. Rüger, Masoram elaboravit G. E. Weil, editio quinta emendata opera A. Schenker, Stuttgart, 1997.
CAD	Reiner, Brinkman, and Roth, eds., <i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of Chicago</i> , 21 vols., Chicago, 1956–2010.
COS	Hallo, ed., <i>Context of Scripture</i> , 3 vols., Leiden, 1997–2002.
Dalman	Dalman, <i>Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina</i> , 7 Bände, Gütersloh, 1928–42.

Abbreviations

DCH	Clines, ed., <i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> , 8 vols., Sheffield, 1993–2011.
DDD	Toorn, Becking, and Horst, eds., <i>Dictionary of Deities and Demons</i> , 2nd revised ed., Leiden, 1999.
DNWSI	Hoftijzer and Jongeling, <i>Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions</i> , 2 vols., HdO 21/1–2, Leiden, 1995.
DUL	Olmo Lete and Sanmartín, <i>Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language</i> , ed. and trans. Watson, 3rd revised ed., 2 vols., HdO 67, Leiden, 2015.
EBR	Allison and Klauck, eds., <i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception</i> , 12 vols., Berlin, 2009—.
Even-Shoshan	Even-Shoshan, <i>A New Concordance of the Bible</i> , 3 vols., Jerusalem, 1982.
Ⲑ	Septuagint (Greek) version. See Ziegler, ed., <i>Jeremias</i> , 3. Auflage, Septuaginta XV, Göttingen, 2006.
Gesenius ¹⁷	Gesenius and Buhl, <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch</i> , in Verbindung mit H. Zimmern, W.M. Müller und O. Weber. Unveränderter Neudruck der 1915 erschienen 17. Auflage, Berlin, 1962.
Gesenius ¹⁸	Gesenius, Meyer, and Donner, <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch</i> , unter zeitweiliger, verantwortlicher Mitarbeit von U. Rüttersworden und J. Renz, bearbeitet und herausgegeben von H. Donner. 18. Auflage, Berlin, 2013.
Gesenius Thes.	Gesenius, <i>Thesaurus philologicus criticus</i> , ed. altera secundum radices digesta priore Germanica longe auctior et emendatior, quem post Gesenii decessum composuit E. Roediger, 3 vols., Leipzig, 1835–53.
GKB	Bergsträßer, <i>Hebräische Grammatik</i> , mit Benutzung der von E. Kautzsch bearbeiteten 28. Auflage von Wilhelm Gesenius hebräischer Grammatik, 2 Bände, Leipzig, 1918–29.
GKC	Kautsch, ed., <i>Wilhelm Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar</i> , 2nd English ed., revised in accordance with the 28th German edition (1909), Oxford, 1910.
GVG	Brockelmann, <i>Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik</i> , 2 Bände, Berlin, 1908–13.
HALAT	Köhler and Baumgartner, eds., <i>Hebräisches und aramäisches Lexikon</i> , 3. Auflage, 5 Lieferungen, Leiden, 1967–96.
HALOT	Köhler, Baumgartner, and Stamm, eds., <i>Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon</i> , study edition, 2 vols., Leiden, 2001.
IBHS	Waltke and O'Connor, <i>Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax</i> , Winona Lake, IN, 1990.
Joüon-Muraoka	Joüon and Muraoka, <i>Grammar of Biblical Hebrew</i> , 2nd revised ed., SubBi 27, Rome, 2006.

Abbreviations

K	Ketib
KAI	Donner and Röllig, <i>Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften</i> , 5., erweiterte und überarbeitete Auflage, Wiesbaden, 2002.
KBL	Köhler and Baumgartner, <i>Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros</i> , 2. Auflage, Leiden, 1958.
König	König, <i>Historisch-kritisches Lehrgebäude</i> , 3 Bände, Leipzig, 1881–97.
KTU	Dietrich, Loretz, and Sanmartín, <i>Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani und anderen Orten</i> , 3., erweiterte Auflage, AOAT 360/1, Münster, 2013.
L	Codex Leningradensis B 19 a. See BHS.
Lane	Lane, <i>Arabic-English Lexicon</i> , 8 vols., London/Edinburgh, 1863–94.
LEH	Lust, Eynikel, and Hauspie, eds., <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint</i> , revised ed., Stuttgart, 2003.
LS	Sokoloff, <i>Syriac Lexicon</i> , Winona Lake, IN/Piscataway, NJ, 2009.
𐤌	Masoretic Text. See BHS.
NIDOTTE	Vangemeren, ed., <i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> , 5 vols., Carlisle, Cumbria, 1997.
Q	Manuscripts discovered at Khirbet Qumran and surrounding areas
Q	Qere
RLA	Streck and Edzard, eds., <i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> , founded by E. Ebeling and B. Meissner, continued by E. Weidner and W. von Soden, 14 Bände, Berlin, 1928—.
RPP	Betz, Browning, Janowski, and Jüngel, eds., <i>Religion Past and Present</i> , 14 vols., Leiden, 2007–13.
Ⲑ	Peshitta (Syriac) version, as found in Ceriani, ed., <i>Translatio syra pescitto</i> , Mediolani, 1876–83.
SAHD	Hoftijzer, Muraoka, and Gzella, eds., <i>Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database</i> , Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database Project, http://www.sahd.div.ed.ac.uk , 1994–.
ⲡ	Targum (Aramaic) version, as found in Sperber, ed., <i>Bible in Aramaic</i> , III, Leiden, 1962.
THAT	Jenni and Westermann, eds., <i>Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , 2 Bände, München, 1971–76.
ThWAT	Botterweck, Ringgren, and Fabry, eds., <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament</i> , 10 Bände, Stuttgart, 1970–2000.
ThWQ	Fabry and Dahmen, eds., <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zu den Qumrantexten</i> , 3 Bände, Stuttgart, 2011–16.
TWNT	Kittel and Friedrich, eds., <i>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i> , 10 Bände, 1933–79.

Abbreviations

ℳ	Vulgate (Latin) version, as found in Weber, ed., <i>Biblia sacra iuxta vulgatam versionem</i> , 2nd corrected ed., Stuttgart, 1975.
WUS	Aistleitner, <i>Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache</i> , ed. Eissfeldt, BVSAB.PH 106/3, Berlin, 1963.
Zorell	Zorell, ed., <i>Lexicon hebraicum et aramaicum</i> , quod aliis collaborantibus, 9 fasciculi, Roma, 1946–54.

Chapter 1. Introduction

Every society in the ancient Near East, in some form or another, knew individuals who spoke on behalf of their gods. In ancient Israel, these individuals were primarily known as prophets. Prophecy is a fundamentally significant category in the religion, history and literature of the Hebrew Bible. How does prophecy work? What does it mean to call someone a prophet? No book in the Hebrew Bible has more to say about prophets than Jeremiah,¹ the primary text corpus for the present study. This investigation returns to basic questions in order to explain the nature of prophecy in ancient Israel. In light of recent critical developments, such a return is warranted. What follows, to borrow a famous phrase, is an account of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the Hebrew book of Jeremiah.²

1. What we talk about when we talk about prophets

In modern critical scholarship on the Hebrew Bible, ‘when we talk about prophets’ we tend to talk about some of the most basic concepts in the discipline. It was Wellhausen who promoted the idea of *lex post prophetas*,³ and his contemporary Duhm who regarded the prophets as religious innovators and champions of ethical monotheism.⁴ The influence of Wellhausen and Duhm’s ideas is staggering, and they ‘deserve to be called the principal architects of the scholarly idea of people called prophets.’⁵ In their wake, the romanticised image of the prophets—free and inspired individuals, without institutional

¹NB, in this study the term ‘Jeremiah’ always refers to either the Hebrew edition of the Jeremiah scroll, or the literary character ירמיה/ירמיהו unless otherwise noted.

²Here I have borrowed from Carver, a 20th century American poet and writer. See Carver, *What We Talk about When We Talk about Love*, in: *Where I’m Calling from*, London, 1993, 138–50.

³Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 6. Ausgabe, Berlin, 1905, 393–98, 409–24.

⁴Duhm, *Theologie der Propheten*, Bonn, 1875, 1–35; Duhm, *Israels Propheten*, Lebensfragen 26, Tübingen, 1916, 3–8. For biographical portraits of Wellhausen and Duhm, see Smend, *From Astruc to Zimmerli*, trans. Kohl, Tübingen, 2007, 91–102, 103–17. For an overview of 19th century scholarship on prophecy, see Seitz, *Prophecy in the Nineteenth Century Reception*, in: *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament*, III/1, ed. Sæbø, in co-operation with P. Machinist and J. L. Ska, Göttingen, 2013, 556–81.

⁵Nissinen, *Prophecy as a Construct*, in: *“Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela”*, ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 31. See also Schmid, *Klassische und nachklassische Deutungen*, *ZNThG* 3 (1996), 225–50.

connections, courageously proclaiming the revealed word of God to hostile audiences—took root in scholarship and exerted a profound influence.⁶ With this picture in mind, and with a positivistic approach to the text of the Bible, traditional scholarship ‘was strongly oriented towards the personal achievements of the great prophets’ and the unique contributions they made to the development of Israelite religion.⁷ Thus it was critical to separate these contributions, the genuine words spoken by the prophets, the *ipsissima verba*, from the accretions of later tradition within the books bearing their names.

Jeremiah, conventionally ‘the paradigmatic *prophet* of the Bible,’ is one of the major figures of this ‘classical’ portrait of prophecy.⁸ In the Hebrew book named after him, there are more narratives about Jeremiah than in any other prophetic book, and deeply emotive ‘confessional’ poetry with a strongly biographical character. One could say that with Jeremiah, the romantic portrait of the prophet reaches its climax, as Lundbom calls him ‘the fullest expression of divine prophecy’.⁹ However, especially after the work of Carroll, it is increasingly clear to scholars that the relationship between Jeremiah *the prophet* and Jeremiah *the book* is a vexed one.¹⁰ Carroll made clear that one cannot conflate the ‘historical’ Jeremiah with the ‘literary’ Jeremiah, especially due to the complex compositional history of the book.¹¹ Furthermore, the strongly biographical character of the book often dramatically influences the way scholars discuss the concept of prophecy in the book. For example, Blenkinsopp suggests that in Jeremiah, ‘the basic prophetic idea of instrument-

⁶ Numerous examples could be cited here. See, e.g., Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, Baltimore, MD, 1940, 228–55; Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II, ETh 1, München, 1960, 83–92; Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, EvTh.B 31, München, 1960; Herrmann, *Ursprung und Funktion der Prophetie*, RhWAW.VG 208, Opladen, 1976, 1–2.

⁷ Nissinen, *Prophecy as a Construct*, 26–27.

⁸ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, OTL, Philadelphia, PA, 1986, 55. See, e.g., Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, AncB 21A, New York, 1999, 92.

⁹ Lundbom, *Jeremiah (Prophet)*, ABD III (1992), 697. See also Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 55–151. Cf. Barstad, *Jeremiah as Text*, in: *Historie og konstruktion*, ed. Müller and Thompson, FBE 14, København, 2005, 11–18.

¹⁰ Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, London, 1981, 5–30; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 55–64. Most recently, see Kratz, *Why Jeremiah?*, in: *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, ed. Najman and Schmid, JSJ.S 173, Leiden, 2017, 197–212; Levinson, *Was Jeremiah Invented?*, in: *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, ed. Najman and Schmid, JSJ.S 173, Leiden, 2017, 213–21.

¹¹ See esp. Duhm, *Jeremia*, KHC 11, Tübingen, 1901, xi–xx; Mowinkel, *Komposition*, SNVAO.HF 1913, Kristiania, 1914; Thiel, *Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25*, WMANT 41, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973; Thiel, *Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45*, WMANT 52, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981; Lohfink, *Gab es eine deuteronomistische Bewegung?*, in: *Jeremia und die »deuteronomistische Bewegung«*, ed. Groß, BBB 98, 1995, 313–82; Römer, *La conversion du prophète Jérémie*, in: *The Book of Jeremiah and Its Reception – Le livre Jérémie et sa réception*, ed. Curtis and Römer, BETL 128, Leuven, 1997, 27–50; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, BE(S) 7, Stuttgart, 2001, 231–60; Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, OTSt, Edinburgh, 2003.

ality, being called and used for a transcendent purpose, is becoming increasingly a matter not just of speaking but of a service tending toward a total life investment.¹² In Jeremiah, it is especially difficult to disentangle *who* Jeremiah is and *what* prophecy is.

Some thirty years ago, Deist suggested the onset of a ‘paradigm shift’ in the study of biblical prophecy.¹³ He identified how new discoveries, changes in intellectual attitudes, new questions, and new generations of scholars have led to the ‘undermining of the dominant paradigm’ indicated above.¹⁴ Chief among these changes for prophetic studies are two developments. First is the discovery that the prophetic phenomenon was not unique to Israel; an ever growing ‘corpus’ of prophetic texts proves that prophetism was an institution found across the ancient Near East.¹⁵ Second is the rise of the socio-anthropological approach, which situates phenomena within their cultural and ideological systems; as Deist notes, ‘[w]ithin this frame of mind it is not *evolution* but *function* that constitutes meaning [my italics].’¹⁶ Understanding prophets requires understanding the cultural systems in which they prophesied.

In the Kuhnian model, paradigm shifts can be slow. New paradigms emerge as new questions are asked of old problems that the old paradigm could not solve.¹⁷ Though it took some time, it is now clear that the image of the prophet as the ‘lonely voice in the wilderness’ is a historical fiction.¹⁸ At the end of his article, Deist identified that the ‘new paradigm’ emerging in prophetic studies

may suggest that the sharp distinction between prophet and priest, and between

¹² Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, Louisville, KY, 1996, 146.

¹³ Deist, Prophets, in: *Prophet und Prophetenbuch*, ed. Fritz, Pohlmann, and Schmitt, BZAW 185, Berlin, 1989, 1–18. The idea of a ‘paradigm shift’—a fundamental change in the philosophical framework of a scientific community in which inquiry takes place, according to accepted procedures and with results deemed valid—is from the famous work of Kuhn, *Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, International Encyclopaedia of Unified Science II/2, Chicago, 1962. Deist’s appropriation of this phrase in prophetic studies has a growing acceptance among scholars; see, e.g., Nissinen, Historical Dilemma, in: *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 103; Kelle, Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship, *CurBR* 12 (2014), 275–320; Kratz, *Prophets of Israel*, trans. Hagedorn and MacDonald, Critical Studies in the Hebrew Bible 2, Winona Lake, IN, 2015, 110.

¹⁴ Deist, Prophets, 5–14.

¹⁵ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*; Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, SAA 9, Helsinki, 1997. Other editions have followed and made these texts even more accessible; see, e.g., Nissinen, ed., *Prophets and Prophecy*, with contributions by C. L. Seow and R. K. Ritner, SBLWAW 12, Atlanta, GA, 2003.

¹⁶ Deist, Prophets, 10.

¹⁷ Deist, Prophets, 14.

¹⁸ Kratz, *Prophets of Israel*, 151.

‘true’ and ‘false’ prophets as well as the traditional picturing of the priests and the ‘professional prophets’ as the villains may be in need of serious rethinking.¹⁹

It is precisely this kind of serious rethinking that prompted the present analysis. In the study of ancient Israelite prophecy generally, and Jeremiah specifically, these distinctions cited by Deist in 1989 persist in contemporary scholarship. This study explores how prophecy works as found in the book of Jeremiah, one of the premier sources for prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. What follows is a review of scholarly literature related to these basic issues: (1) the ‘new paradigm’ for the study of prophecy; (2) the terminology for prophets and their relation to the phenomenon of prophecy; and (3) a particular debate to which this work intervenes, namely, so-called ‘false’ prophecy.

1.1. Constructs of prophecy

So, what do we talk about when we talk about prophets? In order to establish any discourse about ‘prophets’ or ‘prophecy’, it is necessary to define clearly what these terms mean. The nuances of the modern English word ‘prophet’ rather inexactly matches the terminology of ancient sources; the modern concept is strongly future oriented and value laden.²⁰ Most scholars who work with ancient sources for prophecy, as Nissinen points out, are unhappy with the modern definition of ‘prophet’ when applied to the texts. ‘[B]ehind the future-oriented everyday meaning of “prophecy” are other elements which can better claim to be its ‘main’ feature.’²¹ Prediction plays only a small part in the ancient conception of prophecy, which becomes clear when one considers the intellectual and cultural framework to which prophecy belonged.

1.1.1. Definitions of prophecy

Continuing with the term used by Deist, the ‘new paradigm’ in prophetic studies is to consider prophecy as a *phenomenon*, as an occurrence, a type of cross-cultural behaviour observed in various societies across temporal and geographic bounds. Because the phe-

¹⁹Deist, *Prophets*, 18.

²⁰Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, in: *Inspired Speech*, ed. Kaltner and Stulman, JSOTS 378, London, 2004, 18-20.

²¹Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 19.

nomenon is cross-cultural and sociological, the study of prophecy involves specifying what behaviours are prophetic, and how they function in its particular social setting.²²

What, then, constitutes the phenomenon observed in various cultures and societies? Petersen described five typologies which have typically been used to define what it means to be a prophet: (1) to have an 'intense experience of the deity', otherwise referred to as 'ecstasy'; (2) to speak or write 'in a distinctive way'; (3) to 'act in a particular social setting'; (4) to have 'distinctive personal qualities, for example, charisma'; (5) to be an 'intermediary'; and (6) to have a 'distinctive message'.²³ While there is still debate about ecstatic experience as a defining feature of prophecy,²⁴ scholars for the most part would agree with Petersen's conclusion that prophecy is essentially a kind of intermediation.²⁵ Prophets, as scholars prefer to understand them, functioned as mouthpieces for the gods and spoke on their behalf. Weippert's definition of a prophet follows this understanding, and reflects a general consensus:

Bei religiöser Offenbarungsrede ist dann von [Prophetie] zu sprechen, wenn eine Person (a) in einem kognitiven Erlebnis (Vision, Audition, audiovisuelle Erscheinung, Traum o.ä.) der Offenbarung einer Gottheit oder mehrerer Gottheiten teilhaftig wird, und ferner (b) sich durch die betreffende(n) Gottheit(en) beauftragt weiß, das ihr Geoffenbarte in sprachlicher Fassung (als »P.«, »Prophetenspruch«) oder in averbalen Kommunikationsakten (»symbolischen« oder »Zeichenhandlungen«) an einen Dritten (oder Dritte), den (die) eigentlichen Adressaten, weiterzuleiten.²⁶

Weippert's definition does place more emphasis on the inner experience of the prophet than some would prefer, but other contemporary definitions are mostly similar.²⁷ A proph-

²² Nissinen is right to emphasise that prophecy is a *social* rather than a *natural* phenomenon. For this reason, it is necessary to consider the social matrices within which it functions. Nissinen, *Prophecy as a Construct*, 11. See also Barstad, *What Prophets Do*, in: *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 24-31.

²³ See Petersen, *Defining Prophecy*, in: *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, ed. Nissinen, SBLSymS 13, Atlanta, GA, 2000, 33-39. For a detailed discussion of the various scholars who fit in these categories, see Kelle, *Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship*, 283-85.

²⁴ See, e.g., Stökl's view that the Old Babylonian *muhhum* was an ecstatic cult official who would occasionally prophesy. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, CHANE 56, Leiden, 2012, 97-100.

²⁵ Petersen, *Defining Prophecy*, 41-42.

²⁶ Weippert, *Prophetie im Alten Orient*, NBL III (2001), 197. See, e.g., Barstad, *No Prophets?*, *JSOT* 57 (1993), 46; Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, SAAS 7, Helsinki, 1998, 5; Kelle, *Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship*, 292.

²⁷ There are other important definitions which depart from Weippert, but usually only in minor detail.

et, according to the consensus, is a person who functions as an intermediary transmitting information to others regarding the divine will.

1.1.2. Divination and prophecy

If the first task is to define what behaviours are to be deemed ‘prophetic’, then the second is to explain the function of these behaviours in their social settings. As defined above, the prophet is essentially an intermediary between natural and supernatural spheres—in the ancient world, the human and divine realms. As they mediate between these spheres, they are understood to transmit information from one to the other in what Zuesse calls ‘the art or practice of discovering the personal, human significance of future or, more commonly, present or past events.’²⁸ In contrast to empirical or scientific hypotheses, the concerns of divination pertain to the “ought” in relation to an individual or a group.²⁹

Prophecy, according to a modern consensus, is a type of divination.³⁰ This represents a major development in the field. Under the ‘old paradigm’, scholars sought to differentiate between prophecy and divination, quite often for apologetic reasons. In order to give Israelite prophecy a more privileged status, it was contrasted with ‘primitive’ prac-

Cf. Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, in: *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Crim, Furnish, Bailey, and Bucke, Nashville, TN, 1976, 172; Huffmon, *Prophecy. I. Ancient Near Eastern Prophecy*, ABD V (1992), 477; Nissinen, *Falsche Prophetie*, in: *Das Deuteronomium und seine Querbeziehungen*, ed. Veijola, SESJ 62, Göttingen, 1996, 173; Frahm, *Prophetie*, RLA XI (2006), 7–11; Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, in: *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Annus, OIS 6, Chicago, 2010, 342.

²⁸ Zuesse, *Divination: An Overview*, ER IV (2005), 2369. See also Ahituv, *Divination*, EJ V (2007), 703–5; Graf, *Divination/Manticism*, RPP IV (2008), 98–100; Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 341; Schmitt, *Divination. II: Hebrew Bible/Old Testament*, EBR VI (2013), 959–61; Fincke, *Divination im Alten Orient*, in: *Divination in the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake, IN, 2014, 1–20.

²⁹ As such it is not primitive ‘science’, as is sometimes assumed. Zuesse, *Divination: An Overview*, ER IV, 2369.

³⁰ Koch, *Die Propheten*, I, 2. Auflage, Urban-Taschenbücher 280, Stuttgart, 1987, 17; Ellis, *Observations on Mesopotamian Oracles and Prophetic Texts*, JCS 41 (1989), 144–46; Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 47–48; Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, JSOTS 142, Sheffield, 1994, 243–50; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, Valley Forge, PA, 1995, 150–51; Weippert, *Prophetie im Alten Orient*, NBL III, 196–97; Cancik-Kirschbaum, *Prophetismus und Divination*, in: *Propheten in Mari, Assyrien und Israel*, ed. Köckert and Nissinen, FRLANT 201, Göttingen, 2003, 33–53; Kitz, *Prophecy as Divination*, CBQ 65 (2003), 22–42; Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21; Jong, *Isaiah*, VTS 117, Leiden, 2007, 287–319; Barstad, *What Prophets Do*, 24–31; Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 345–47; Scurlock, *Prophecy as a Form of Divination*, in: *Divination and Interpretation of Signs in the Ancient World*, ed. Annus, OIS 6, Chicago, 2010, 277–316; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 7–11; Anthonioz, *Le prophétisme biblique*, LeDiv 261, Paris, 2013, 21–67; Lenzi, *Revisiting Biblical Prophecy*, in: *Divination, Politics, and Ancient Near Eastern Empires*, ed. Stökl and Lenzi, ANEM 7, Atlanta, GA, 2014, 65–86.

tices found in neighbouring cultures.³¹ Even quite recently, one finds variations of this view. For example, Uffenheimer claims that ‘divination was a dominant element in early prophecy’, but ‘[i]n later, classical prophecy, it was largely eclipsed’;³² and Vondergeest argues the deuteronomic traditions draw ‘a sharp distinction between prophecy and divination, clearly attempting to portray the former as a central practice while marginalizing the latter as much as possible to show it as peripheral.’³³

At least as far back as Plato (*Phaedrus*, 244a–245a) and Cicero (*De divinatione*, 1.1; 1.4; 1.12; 1.34), divinatory techniques have been distinguished according to two main types: those which use deductive, technical reasoning based on observation, and those which use inspired mental states.³⁴ In modern terminology, these forms are commonly referred to as ‘technical’ and ‘intuitive’ forms of divination.³⁵ Though this distinction holds for divinatory *techniques*, it probably should not be stressed too much when understanding the function of divination.³⁶ Both ‘technical’ and ‘intuitive’ divination involve the transmission of information. As observed by Cryer, the information mediated by the diviner is, to the practitioner, a form of knowledge. He offers ‘a purely formal definition of divination as a set of socially defined and structured procedures for producing (notional) knowledge in a society from what are presumed to be extra-human sources.’³⁷ The ‘notional’ quality of knowledge produced by such procedures has to do with its perceived importance rather than its positivistic truth value. Unlike scientific explanations, divinatory prognoses do not produce falsifiable results; it is not expected to do so. Put another way, the epistemological status of divinatory knowledge pertains to matters of value instead of fact. In this regard, ‘truth’ equals ‘significance’.

As Cryer points out, quite appropriately for the discussion at hand, this emphasis on notional knowledge ‘avoids the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to

³¹ Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 47–48.

³² Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel*, trans. Louvish, Jerusalem, 1999, 492–93.

³³ Vondergeest, *Prophecy and Divination*, PhD thesis, Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, 2000, 294. For this reference, I am indebted to Thelle, *Reflections of Ancient Israelite Divination*, in: *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Jacobs and Person, AIL 14, Atlanta, GA, 2013, 23, n. 46.

³⁴ See Flower, *Seer in Ancient Greece*, Berkeley, CA, 2008, 84–91.

³⁵ See, e.g., Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21–22; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 10–11.

³⁶ Toorn, *L’oracle de victoire*, *RB* 94 (1987), 88–93; Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 47–48; Tiemeyer, *Prophecy as a Way of Cancelling Prophecy*, *ZAW* 117 (2005), 329–50. Cf. Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 343–45; Lenzi, *Revisiting Biblical Prophecy*, 68–77.

³⁷ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 121–22.

do with “predicting the future”.³⁸ Rather than think of the system of divinatory knowledge as solely interested in future events, it is better to understand divinatory inquiry as ‘triggered by uncertainty’.³⁹ Thus, in Nissinen’s words, the ‘future-oriented’ aspects of divination are not necessarily attempts to predict future events; rather, it is ‘a method of tackling the anxiety about the insecurity of life and coping with the risk brought about human ignorance.’ The diviner, ‘by virtue of their background, education, or behavior’ is able to gain access to super-human knowledge that is sufficient for alleviating this anxiety.⁴⁰

1.1.3. Ancient Hebrew prophecy and biblical prophecy

The description of prophecy as phenomenon takes it as an observable instance of something. But where and how is it observed? Prophecy in the ancient world is known almost exclusively through texts. It is at this point that the study of prophecy as phenomenon reaches one of its ‘most vexing issues’, namely, the extent to which the phenomenon of prophecy in the biblical and ancient Near Eastern *texts* corresponds to ‘the socio-historical *realities* of prophecy [my italics]’.⁴¹

In the case of the Bible, the relationship between text and reality is fraught with difficulty and debate, and scholars such as Edelman and Ben Zvi view the prophetic books as products of scribal activity in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. Israelite prophecy, then, is a literary creation that has little to do with ancient realities of prophecy at all.⁴² One corollary to this argument is that prophetic terminology (i.e. נְבִיא) was grafted onto non-prophetic literature, thus ‘creating’ the prophets in the scribal process. Many have criticised this view,⁴³ however, some care must be taken to clarify the relationship between the phenomenon of ‘ancient Hebrew prophecy’ and the phenomenon of ‘biblical prophecy’.⁴⁴

³⁸ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 122, see also n. 1.

³⁹ Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 341.

⁴⁰ In my reading of Nissinen, I do not think this description of ‘anxiety’ is an attempt to psychologise, but a more general comment about the universal human experience of being confronted with a future that is unknown. Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 341.

⁴¹ Kelle, *Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship*, 277.

⁴² See the volume of essays by Edelman and Ben Zvi, eds., *Production of Prophecy*, Bible World, London, 2009. Cf. Kelle, *Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship*, 296–300.

⁴³ Williamson, Response to A. G. Auld, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 33–39; Ringgren, *Israelite Prophecy*, in: *Congress Volume Jerusalem 1986*, ed. Emerton, VTS 40, Leiden, 1988, 204–10; Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 39–46; Fenton, *Israelite Prophecy*, in: *The Elusive Prophet*, ed. Moor, Leiden, 2001, 129–41.

Instead of viewing these as mutually exclusive approaches, though, it is better to let 'creative tension between them generate diverse understandings of prophetic identity and activity that cannot be subsumed under a single model.'⁴⁵

To what extent does the *terminology* of prophecy (i.e. נביא) relate to the ancient *phenomenon* of prophecy? A series of papers by Auld and their responses,⁴⁶ cast doubt on the term נביא as an appropriate label for the so-called 'classical' prophets of Israel. In Auld's view, the 'prophets' were never called נביאים because they hated נביאים and 'would hardly have been seen dead in their company'.⁴⁷ It was only later that the term נביא was 'grafted' onto them in certain books, thus making them 'prophetic';⁴⁸ the positive application of the term נביא to the 'classical' prophets was an editorial development well-beyond their individual lifetimes. In Carroll's view, the 'prophets' were never really prophets at all; '[t]hey were certainly poets, probably intellectuals, and possibly ideologues'.⁴⁹ Such distance exists between text and history, however, that their societies are long lost to us, and we can know little to nothing about their lives.⁵⁰

In this debate, Jeremiah holds a special place, sometimes considered to be one of the first Israelite prophets to be called a נביא.⁵¹ Similar arguments in support of Auld's

⁴⁴ Nissinen, *Historical Dilemma*; Anthonioz, *Le prophétisme biblique*, 11-15; Nissinen, *Prophecy as a Construct*, 33-35.

⁴⁵ Kelle, *Phenomenon of Israelite Prophecy in Contemporary Scholarship*, 277. See also Nissinen, *Historical Dilemma*, 107-08.

⁴⁶ Auld, *Prophets Through the Looking Glass*, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 3-23. The arguments in his paper from 1983 are closely connected to the data surveyed in Auld, *Prophets and Prophecy*, *ZAW* 96 (1984), 66-82. These studies opened two exchanges of articles in *JSOT*. The first included Auld, *Response to Robert Carroll and Hugh Williamson*, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 41-44; Carroll, *Poets not Prophets*, *JSOT* 27 (1983), 25-31; Williamson, *Response to A. G. Auld*. A second exchange revisited these issues in Auld, *Prophecy in Books*, *JSOT* 48 (1990), 31-32; Carroll, *Whose Prophet?*, *JSOT* 48 (1990), 33-49; Overholt, *"It Is Difficult to Read"*, *JSOT* 48 (1990), 51-54; Overholt, *Prophecy in History*, *JSOT* 48 (1990), 3-29. These arguments were summarised and critiqued in Barstad, *No Prophets?*

⁴⁷ Auld, *Word of God and Word of Man*, in: *Ascribe to the Lord*, ed. Eslinger and Taylor, *JSOTS* 67, Sheffield, 1988, 245.

⁴⁸ Auld, *Prophets Through the Looking Glass*, 16.

⁴⁹ Carroll, *Poets not Prophets*, 25, also 28.

⁵⁰ Carroll's quite brilliant chapter titled 'The Quest of the Historical Jeremiah' is a clear articulation of these problems and his views; see Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 5-30. Cf. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 55-64. These questions are still quite live in Jeremiah scholarship; cf. Kratz, *Why Jeremiah?*; Levinson, *Was Jeremiah Invented?*

⁵¹ Auld suggests that the words 'prophet' and 'prophecy' both 'only came to be attached to those whom we regard as the towering prophets of the bible in a period no earlier than when Jeremiah and Ezekiel became similarly re-presented.' Auld, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 82. Similarly, see Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 185.

view are found in more recent literature. Gonçalves argues that the ‘writing prophets’ resisted and opposed נביאים in their lifetimes, and a positive tradition of prophecy in Israel, originating with Moses, is a later deuteronomistic construction.⁵² In like manner, de Jong argues that successive ‘profiles’ of Jeremiah in the stages of the book’s composition are a ‘re-definition of the prophetic function.’⁵³ Jeremiah progresses from a figure ‘pro society’ to a figure ‘contra society’, only then to be recast positively in Mosaic prophetic succession.⁵⁴ Stökl also makes the more general claim, in agreement with Carroll, Gonçalves and de Jong, that ‘[i]t appears relatively certain that almost none of the pre-exilic writing prophets regarded themselves as a נביא.’⁵⁵

Several aspects of the debate opened by Auld are related to the discussion of ‘ancient Hebrew prophecy’ and ‘biblical prophecy’ above. What is the relationship between text and history, or between literary and social phenomena, in Jeremiah? The focus on the ‘statistical use of terminology’ in exchanges between Auld, Carroll and their respondents, according to Barstad, ‘may establish whether or not the later editors regarded these books as “prophetic”, but it does not necessarily follow from this that the materials found in these books were not “prophetic” in the first place.’⁵⁶ Nissinen is happy to affirm that the Hebrew prophetic texts are ‘late literary creations of the Persian, or even Hellenistic eras’, but still affirms that there are ‘good enough reasons to see a historical relation between these texts and the prophetic phenomenon.’⁵⁷

As Barstad has put it, much of what is found in Jeremiah corresponds with the ‘common pattern’ of prophecy in the ancient Near East, even if much of the book is fictional.⁵⁸ The distinction between ‘ancient’ and ‘literary’ constructs allows the scholar to

⁵² Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », in: *World of the Aramaeans*, ed. Daviau, Wevers, and Weigl, JSOTS 324, Sheffield, 2001, 144–85.

⁵³ Jong, Why Jeremiah is Not Among the Prophets, *JSOT* 35 (2011), 510.

⁵⁴ Jong, Why Jeremiah is Not Among the Prophets, 507–08. There is a great deal of recent literature on this topic, as the provenance of ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ traditions is hotly debated. Kratz, Neue in der Prophetie, in: *Prophetie in Israel*, ed. Fischer, Schmid, and Williamson, ATM 11, Münster, 2003, 1–22. Williamson cautions that the pendulum cannot swing too far, however, toward ‘a prejudice in favour of dating only positive oracles as early.’ Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, in: *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 273–300, cit. 283. Cf. Blum, Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext, in: *From Ebla to Stellenbosch*, ed. Cornelius and Jonker, Wiesbaden, 2008, 81–115.

⁵⁵ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 184–86, esp. 184.

⁵⁶ Barstad, No Prophets?, 52.

⁵⁷ Nissinen, Historical Dilemma, 115.

⁵⁸ Barstad, What Prophets Do, 27.

read Jeremiah in a non-positivistic way. Nissinen affirms this essential point, that ‘there is an element of fact in every fiction’ and that although prophetic books ‘do not translate as accurate records of historical factualities’, they do ‘in all likelihood present their narrative world in a way that was imaginable to their audiences.’⁵⁹ Thus, the discussion of the social realities of prophecy and the literary presentation of prophecy in Jeremiah can be placed in conversation; one can use the social model to describe how the prophetic phenomenon functions in the book apart from an historical biography of the prophet.

1.2. Prophetic terminology. The lexeme נביא

So far in this review of literature, I have outlined the current scholarly discussion of the phenomenon of prophecy. Now that the subject matter is established conceptually, I shall turn to the terminology used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to the phenomenon. The two most important ‘prophetic’ terms in the Old Testament are the Hebrew נביא and the Greek προφήτης. Here the two main issues relate to definitions and method, that is, what the words mean, how one determines their meaning.

With 322 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible,⁶⁰ the nominal lexeme נביא, and its derived forms, is the most frequently used terms for ‘prophet’ by a wide margin.⁶¹ From extra-biblical evidence, it is also clear that the lexeme נביא has some antiquity; it is used in Judah at least as far back as the late seventh or early sixth century BCE.⁶² The word refers to a variety of prophetic individuals and activities, and its semantic value seems to have changed over time (cf. 1 Sam 9.9).

⁵⁹Nissinen, *Historical Dilemma*, 109.

⁶⁰There are 322 occurrences of the lexeme נביא in the Hebrew Bible; 95 of these occurrences are found in Jeremiah, the highest number of any book. The following is a tabulation of instances of נביא according to major corpora in the Hebrew Bible, sorted by percentage of the total number: Jeremiah (x95) = 29.5%; Kings (x84) = 26.09% (1 Kgs [x50] = 15.53%, 2 Kgs [x34] = 10.56%); Chronicles (x31) = 9.63% (1 Chr [x4] = 1.24%, 2 Chr [x27] = 8.39%); Twelve Prophets (x29) = 9.01%; Ezekiel (x17) = 5.28%; Pentateuch (x15) = 4.66% (Deuteronomy [x10] = 3.11%); Psalms (x3) = 0.93%.

⁶¹Petersen identified four ‘role labels’ for prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. Petersen, *Roles of Israel's Prophets*, JSOTS 17, Sheffield, 1981.

⁶²This is evident in finds from ancient Lachish in the Judaeen Shephelah. The presence of the lexeme נביא in Lachish ostrakon III, line 20 (KAI 193), as Stökl observes, ‘makes it abundantly clear even to the most ardent sceptic that the word is at least of late pre-exilic origin.’ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 175. See Barstad, Lachish Ostrakon III, in: *Avraham Malamat Volume*, ed. Aḥituv and Levine, EriS 24, Jerusalem, 1993, 8*–12*; Parker, Lachish Letters, in: *Uncovering Ancient Stones*, ed. Hopfe and Richardson, Winona Lake, IN, 1994, 65–78.

The vast majority of previous scholarship on the word נביא has appealed to etymology and comparative philology in order to clarify the root and its meaning. These traditional philological methods have exerted enormous influence in the field and continue to do so.⁶³ One should not look past the contributions of philology and etymology, so I will briefly review the (vast) literature on the topic and survey the main positions.⁶⁴

For the etymology of Hebrew נביא, scholars have mostly appealed to cognates in Akkadian and Arabic; given the rich stores of vocabulary available in these languages, this is rather unsurprising. There is general agreement that the root of the Hebrew noun נביא is נבא,⁶⁵ though scholars have made a variety of other suggestions: Land suggested a passive form from נבוא;⁶⁶ Robertson Smith thought it ‘hardly doubtful’ it derives from an Arabic stem *nb*;⁶⁷ Gesenius suggested it derives from Syriac and Arabic *nb* ‘(bubble up)’;⁶⁸ and Görg suggested a derivation from Egyptian *nb* ‘(lord)’ or *nbʿ* ‘(to rage, to be excited)’.⁶⁹ On comparative Semitic evidence, the Hebrew root נבא is more likely, as a range of languages attest the common Semitic root *nb* found in, for example, Akkadian,⁷⁰ Aramaic,⁷¹ Syriac,⁷² Mandaic,⁷³ Arabic,⁷⁴ Old South Arabian,⁷⁵ Sabaic,⁷⁶ and Ethiopic.⁷⁷ Instead of an Arabic ori-

⁶³ See, e.g., Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 4.

⁶⁴ For bibliographic material in this section, in addition to literature cited in lexic, I have relied on Jeremias, נביא, THAT II (1976), 7–26; Müller, נביא, ThWAT V (1986), 140–63; Stökl, נביא/נביא, SAHD, (2012).

⁶⁵ HALOT I, 661–62; Gesenius⁸, 773–74; BDB, 611–12. See also Ben Yehuda IV, 3482–85.

⁶⁶ Land, Over den godsnaam יהוה, *ThT* 2 (1868), 172–73.

⁶⁷ Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, new ed., with Introduction and additional notes by T. K. Cheyne, London, 1895, 390, n. 18.

⁶⁸ Gesenius *Thes.* II, 838. See also Keunen, *Onderzoek*, 3 delen, Amsterdam, 1861–65, II, 5–7, esp. n. 8; Keunen, *Profeten*, 2 delen, Leiden, 1875, I, 49.

⁶⁹ Görg, Weiteres zur Etymologie von nabî, *BN* 22 (1983), 9–11; Görg, Addenda zur Diskussion um *nābî*, *BN* 31 (1986), 25–26. Cf. the suggested Egyptian etymology of *nb ʿw* ‘god honoured one’ by Walker, What is a *nābhî*?, *ZAW* 73 (1961), 99–100.

⁷⁰ Akkadian *nabû* A, CAD XI/1, 32–39; *nabû(m)* II, AHW II, 699–700. Cf. the adjectival form *nabû* (*nabûu*), CAD XI/1, 31.

⁷¹ HALOT II, 1924; ATTM I, 632. Dalman, *Aramäisch-neuhebräisches Handwörterbuch*, 2. Auflage, Frankfurt am Main, 1922, 260. Cf. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, Leiden, 1886, 158, 232.

⁷² LS, 882.

⁷³ See NBA I (‘to act as a prophet, prophesy’) in Drower and Macuch, *Mandaic Dictionary*, Oxford, 1963, 287. See also the participial *ettafel* form מיתאנביא (‘ist Prophet’) noted by Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik*, Halle, 1875, 265.

⁷⁴ See *naba’a* (‘utter a low voice, or sound’) and *naba* (‘utter a sound, cry’) in Lane VIII, 2752–53.

⁷⁵ Conti Rossini, *Chrestomathia Arabica*, Pubblicazioni dell’Istituto per l’Oriente, Roma, 1931, 183. See also Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, Leipzig, 1914, 139.

⁷⁶ Compare the entries for *nb* (‘promise, vow an offering to a deity’) in Beeston, Ghul, Müller, and Ryckmans, *Dictionnaire sabéen*, Publication of the University of Sanaa, Yar, Louvain-la-Neuve/Beyrouth, 1982. and NB’ I (‘announce, promise’) in Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic*, HSS 25, Chico, CA, 1982, 289–90.

gin, Ṭur-Sinai and Albright suggested that the word derives from Akkadian *nabû(m)* ('to name, invoke, call'), and this is now the common view.⁷⁸

While accepting the derivation of נָבִיא from the Hebrew root נִבָּא, still more suggestions have been made regarding the sense of the root. Following the etymological link to Akkadian, and a basic sense of *nb'* found in the common Semitic root, the standard view relates the sense of נָבִיא as a nominative from 'to call'.⁷⁹ The remaining debate concerns whether the sense is active, meaning 'one who calls (upon the gods)', or passive, meaning 'one who is called (by the gods)'. In morphological terms, the lexeme נָבִיא is a *qātîl* pattern noun, a form traditionally understood to have either an active or passive meaning.⁸⁰ The active meaning won some impressive support from Brockelmann, König and Barth, and was advanced more recently by Fleming.⁸¹ However, the passive sense gradually became the majority view.⁸² Huehnergard marshalled together evidence for the *qātîl* pattern in Biblical Hebrew, and concluded that 'there are no certain examples of active *qātîl* forms'.⁸³

⁷⁷ See the entry for *nabiyy* ('prophet, one who predicts'), Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Geez*, Wiesbaden, 1991, 385, cf. pp. 649, 792. According to Leslau, the Ge'ez word derives from the Arabic term *nabîy* rather than from Hebrew or Aramaic.

⁷⁸ Ṭur-Sinai (Torczyner), *Das literarische Problem der Bibel*, ZDMG 85 (1931), 322; Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 231–32. See also Albright, *Yahweh and the Gods of Canaan*, Garden City, NY, 1968, 208–09.

⁷⁹ Fleming suggests that this derivation is not from the Akkadian verb *nabû(m)*, but from the terms *nābî* and **munabbiātu*, of West Semitic origin, attested in Akkadian from Mari and Emar. He suggests these terms refer to prophets, a view countered by Huehnergard and Stökl. See Fleming, *Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabî*, CBQ 55 (1993), 217–24; Fleming, *Nābû and Munabbiātu*, JAOS 113 (1993), 175–83. Huehnergard and Stökl have rejected this view; see Huehnergard, *Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî*, in: *Frank Moore Cross Volume*, ed. Levine, King, Naveh, and Stern, Erls 26, Jerusalem, 1999, 88*–93*; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 61–66.

⁸⁰ GKC §84; GVG I, §138, pp. 354–56; Bauer-Leander II, 40–71; Joüon-Muraoka, §88 E b. On נָבִיא as a *qātîl* form, see, e.g., Huehnergard, *Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî*; Fox, *Semitic Noun Patterns*, HSS 52, Winona Lake, IN, 2003, 187–96; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 158.

⁸¹ GVG I, §138, p. 354; König, *Der Offenbarungsbegriff des Alten Testaments*, 2 Bände, Leipzig, 1882, 71–72; Barth, *Nominalbildung*, 2. Ausgabe, Leipzig, 1894, §125, 184; Fleming, *Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabî*; Fleming, *Prophets and Temple Personnel*, in: *The Priests in the Prophets*, ed. Grabbe and Bellis, JSOTS 408, London, 2004, 61–64.

⁸² See, e.g., Ṭur-Sinai (Torczyner), *Das literarische Problem der Bibel*, 322; Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 232; Jeremias, נָבִיא, THAT II, 7; Petersen, *Roles of Israel's Prophets*, 71; Müller, נָבִיא, ThWAT V, 143–45; Huehnergard, *Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî*, *91–*92; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 166–67.

⁸³ Huehnergard, *Qātîl and Qātîl Nouns*, in: *Sha'are Lashon*, ed. Maman, 3 vols., Jerusalem, 2007, *28. This confirms his earlier view, that '[t]here are, in short, no *qātîl* forms for which an active meaning is necessary, or even the most likely', expressed in Huehnergard, *Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nābî*. Cf. Joüon-Muraoka, §88 E b. Fox, *Semitic Noun Patterns*, 193.

Thus, deriving from the Semitic root *nb* ‘to call’, the Hebrew word נביא is translated ‘one who is called’.⁸⁴

There are some problems in this approach. The first problem, pointed out by Fleming, is that the idiomatic use of the Akkadian verb *nabû(m)* tends to include its direct object, most often *šumu(m)* (‘name’), and often includes mention of the actual name.⁸⁵ In the use of this idiom, one mostly finds ‘the narrow application of this idiom to election of kings and rulers.’⁸⁶ Nowhere is used to describe a religious intermediary.

In discussing etymologies, Barr asserted that ‘the test of explanations of words is by their contexts.’⁸⁷ Turning to the evidence in biblical Hebrew, it is interesting that the verb קרא is used in reference to a נביא or their behaviour only three times. 1 Sam 9.9 relates how in older times, the ראה (‘seer’) was called a נביא, providing no evidence for נביא as ‘one who is called’. Fleming refers to two marginal cases in 1 Kgs 18.26 and 2 Kgs 5.11. In both texts, the activity of a נביא includes ‘calling on the name’ (קרא בשם), of Ba‘al and YHWH respectively. Fleming then suggests these instances ‘may represent a vestige of the prophet as “namer” in the Bible’; however, just as one must attend to the idiomatic use of Akkadian *nabû(m)*, the same must be done for the phrase קרא בשם, a common idiom for prayer or worship that is in no way restricted to specific religious intermediaries or cultic settings.⁸⁸

Here I would refer to Barr’s dictum, that ‘the etymology of a word is not a statement about its meaning but about its history.’⁸⁹ It would be a misrepresentation to say that he rejected etymology altogether; rather, Barr advocated for consistency in methods and a clear understanding of the claims one can make from them. In his view,

⁸⁴ Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 167.

⁸⁵ See *nabû* A, CAD XI/1, 33–37.

⁸⁶ Fleming, *Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabi*, 221. See also Uffenheimer, *Early Prophecy in Israel*, 17; Fleming, *Prophets and Temple Personnel*, 61.

⁸⁷ Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, London, 1961, 113.

⁸⁸ For the phrase, see Gen 4.26; 12.8; 13.4; 21.33; 26.25; 1 Kgs 18.24; 2 Kgs 5.11; Isa 64.6; Jer 10.25; Joel 3.5; Zeph 3.9; Zech 13.9; Psa 79.6; 80.19; 116.4, 13, 17. Labuschagne also points to an idiomatic use of קרא בשם יהוה which expresses an announcement of the significance of YHWH’s name (Exod 33.19; 34.5; Isa 12.4; Psa 105.1 = 1 Chr 16.8). Labuschagne, קרא, *THAT II* (1976), 672–74. See also

⁸⁹ Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 109. In the present debate, it is interesting to note that Robertson Smith already noted that ‘[i]n this case, the etymology becomes comparatively unimportant, and in any case the origin of the name lies too remote from the historical development of Hebrew prophecy to be of value in illustration of the conception of a prophet among the Israelites.’ Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, 390, n. 18.

A crassly arbitrary method can be avoided only when it is accepted that etymological statements are historical and not authoritative and that semantic statements must be based on the social linguistic consciousness related to usage.⁹⁰

While the etymological discussions cited above may shed light on the history of the Hebrew word נביא, they contribute very little to the meaning of the word as it is used in context. There is no convincing evidence that נביא means ‘the called’ in any text in the Hebrew Bible. Even Stökl has to admit after his etymological discussion that there is ‘no indication that Israelites or Judeans would have understood it to mean anything else but simply ‘prophet’ in the post-exilic period.’⁹¹ This definition for the biblical usage is not very problematic, it simply raises a natural follow-up question: what is a prophet?

1.3. ‘False’ prophecy

So far I have outlined some of the basic elements in the discussion of prophets and prophecy. The constructs of ancient Near Eastern and biblical prophecy operate within a divinatory framework, and these phenomena are referred to with particular terminology which are important for understanding the phenomena themselves. It is well-known that in several passages, the Greek versions of Jeremiah and Zechariah use the term ψευδοπροφήτης (‘false prophet’) for the Hebrew נביא instead of the usual προφήτης.⁹² Hebrew has no word for ‘false prophet’,⁹³ so the Greek word, a neologism invented by Jewish translators in the Hellenistic period,⁹⁴ adds another interpretive element beyond προφήτης. The word ψευδοπροφήτης might have been new, but the problem of ‘falsehood’

⁹⁰ Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 159.

⁹¹ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 167. Here my question in response would be, why stop at the post-exilic period, especially in light of the use of the term in Lachish ostrakon III (KAI 193)?

⁹² In the Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible, there are ten occurrences of the lexeme ψευδοπροφήτης, nine of which are in Jeremiah: Jer 6.13; 33.7, 8, 11, 16 [=26.7, 8, 11, 16 M]; 34.9 [=27.9 M]; 35.1 [=28.1 M]; 36.1, 8 [=29.1, 8 M]; cf. Zech 13.2. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, BZAW 124, Berlin, 1971, 1. NB, there are a number of differences in the versification of 6 and M for Jeremiah. This fact is complicated by differences in the versification of the various editions of 6. In this study, all verse references for 6 follow that of the Göttingen edition; see Ziegler, *Jeremias*..

⁹³ The closest construction comes in Jer 23.26, where נביא is the *nomens regens* in the phrase נביאי תרמת לבם (‘prophets of deceit of their heart’).

⁹⁴ LEH, 673. See also Krämer, προφήτης, προφήτις, προφητεύω, προφητεία, προφητικός, ψευδοπροφήτης A. Die Wortgruppe in der Profangräzität, TWNT VI (1959), 784; Reiling, ψευδοπροφήτης, NT 13 (1971), 148; Vawter, Were the Prophets *nābîs*?, *Bib.* 66 (1985), 218-19.

in prophecy was not; the Greek speaking ancient world was well-acquainted with the problem of trustworthiness in divination.⁹⁵ With ψευδοπροφήτης, the translators did not introduce a new idea; they recognised a problem in the texts they read and sought to clarify it according to their understanding of what it meant to be a נביא. For a long time indeed, the question of what constitutes a ‘false’ prophet was inseparable from the question of what makes a ‘true’ prophet.

What happens when a prophet is ‘false’? Or, as Carroll puts it, when prophecy *fails*?⁹⁶ Prophetic conflict, ‘false’ prophets/prophecy, inner-prophetic polemics, prophet-versus-prophet, these are all headings used to describe a prolific sub-section of prophetic research related to this question. All of these topics relate to the basic problem of charlatanism in prophetic speech and strife among prophets. A variety of narratives and polemics show prophets engaged in a kind of conflict with one another, and are related to the problem of so-called ‘false prophecy’. In a classic study of the topic, Crenshaw suggested that these texts, each in their own way, point to a problem inherent to the prophetic process, what he called ‘the Achilles-heel of ancient prophecy, namely the absence of any validation for a prophetic word.’⁹⁷

Various models have been used to frame the nature of false prophecy or prophetic conflict, but there continue to be several main trends in distinguishing between prophets which roughly correlate with the categories of ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophets. Thus, while Lange’s divisions between three periods holds, it is also helpful to classify studies in this area according to type. I have done so here according to the following categories: (1) theology, morality and ethics; (2) socio-anthropology and ideology; (3) psychology and ecstasy; and (4) tradition-history.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ For an excellent discussion of similar issues in ancient Greece, see the chapter ‘Disbelief and Skepticism about Seers’ in Flower, *Seer in Ancient Greece*, 132–52. He concludes his discussion with a comment relevant for the present context: ‘What we can say, what the evidence unequivocally shows, is that most people throughout antiquity had a belief in the validity and importance of divination. As in all societies that practice divination, the figure of the seer was both respected and ridiculed, but he or she was never wholly dismissed. And even if a particular seer was shown up as a charlatan or a failure, a person could and did take comfort in the conviction that other seers were competent and trustworthy. One really had no choice if one wanted to take advantage of such knowledge and advice as the gods were willing to share’ (p. 152).

⁹⁶ Carroll, *When Prophecy Failed*, London, 1979.

⁹⁷ Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 38. This ‘Achilles-heel’ view is echoed in Hossfeld and Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet*, BiBe 9, Freiburg, 1973, 13.

⁹⁸ These categories are broad by necessity, since there are a huge number of works in this area. I have tried to be as fair as possible in grouping these works together according to these categories. As is often the

1.3.1. Theology, morality and ethics

One of the most common approaches to the question of ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy is essentially theological in nature. In this approach, interpreters have understood the differences and conflicting perspectives among prophets to reflect beliefs regarding worship, faith and salvation; at the heart of these studies are conceptions of God’s action in history, and the proper (and improper) responses of the people of God.

In a classic articulation of this view, von Rad understood prophetic conflict primarily between institutional *Heilspropheten* promoting nationalistic expectations of salvation and free *Unheilspropheten* who accurately understood YHWH’s action in their own historical period.⁹⁹ These disagreements were essentially theological, as von Rad states,

‘Es handelt sich nicht um soziale Fragen, nicht um den Kultus, nicht um das Vergeltungsdogma, nicht um das Verhältnis der Fremdvölker zu Jahwe. Allein die Frage nach dem Schicksal des eigenen Volkes steht zur Debatte und auch da nur die Frage: Heil oder Gericht.’¹⁰⁰

It is only in the prophet’s attention to the will of YHWH within the present historical moment that the ‘true’ prophet is able to identify the ‘false’.¹⁰¹ Von Rad, and others in his wake, did not think that there was any one single criterion for distinguishing between true and false prophecy; only ‘the complete historical reality’ can help adjudicate between prophets and their messages.¹⁰² More generally, however, many other studies implicitly or explicitly regard ‘doom’ prophecy in the biblical tradition as true, and ‘salvation’ prophecy as false—or at least more suspect since ‘Unheilsprophetie war die Regel’.¹⁰³

case in a review of scholarship, there is an art to how much one focuses on the ‘forest’ in contrast to the ‘trees’. Here my aim lies more with the forest, as I emphasise common elements of various scholarly works in terms of shared patterns and continuity. For bibliographic material in this section, I have consulted the literature reviews in Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 5-22; Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, FAT 34, Tübingen, 2002, 4-33. Relevant entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedia include Ramlot, Prophétisme, in: *Dictionnaire de la Bible. Supplément*, VIII, ed. Pirot, Robert, Cazelles, and Feuillet, Paris, 1972, 1040-50; Crenshaw, Prophecy, False, in: *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Crim, Furnish, Bailey, and Bucke, Nashville, TN, 1976, 701-2; Paul and Sperling, Prophets and Prophecy, EJ XVI (2007), 576-77; Klein, False Teachers, False Prophets I. Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, EBR VIII (2014), 779-81.

⁹⁹ Rad, Die falschen Propheten, ZAW 51 (1933), 109-20.

¹⁰⁰ Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 112.

¹⁰¹ Rad, Die falschen Propheten, 120.

¹⁰² Buber, False Prophets, in: *Biblical Humanism*, ed. Glatzer, London, 1968, 169.

¹⁰³ Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, *EvTh* 10 (1955), 465. See also Jeremias, *Kult-*

A similar understanding of false prophecy views the moral life of the prophet as a guarantor of his or her truthfulness.¹⁰⁴ The true prophet is a humble representative of God who leads the people to repentance, while the immorality of the false prophet demonstrates that they do not truly know God or God's will.¹⁰⁵ Skinner summarises this view by emphasising that the falseness of the messenger falsifies the message:

In their indifference to the sin of the people, in their positive encouragement of evil-doers, and in their own immoral lives, they proclaim their entire ignorance of Yahwe's truth. It is the men themselves who are false; and to a false heart no true revelation is vouchsafed.¹⁰⁶

Thus the only way to measure a prophet's truthfulness is by the 'fruit' of their moral life,¹⁰⁷ the work of the spirit of God in their person,¹⁰⁸ and the prophet's individual dependence on the word of God.¹⁰⁹

While morality is a popular measure of prophet veracity, an 'unfaithfulness towards God', as Shead asserts, 'infects all of the person's speech and behaviour with a moral taint that is real and present even in the absence of outward immorality.'¹¹⁰ Thus along with moral behaviour, scholars have often emphasised a necessary 'orthodoxy' of the prophet,¹¹¹

prophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung, WMANT 35, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1970; Jeremias, Vollmacht des Propheten, *EvTh* 31 (1971), 305–22; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?, *NRTh* 99 (1977), 689–91.

¹⁰⁴ In Willi's articulation, '[d]as ganze konkrete Leben des Propheten muss die Echtheit seiner Botschaft bestätigen.' Willi, »Anhaltspunkte« zur Unterscheidung, *FKTh* 26 (2010), 102. Similarly, see Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie*, SGV 237, Tübingen, 1962, 28–29; Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich*, Gütersloh, 1963, 125; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?, 696–98; McNamara, Kriterien zur Unterscheidung, *Conc(D)* 14 (1978), 568–74; Münsterlein, *Kriterien wahrer und falscher Prophetie*, 2. Auflage, EHS.T 23/33, Bern, 1979; Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, *ThBeitr* 28 (1997), 348; Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine 14, Cambridge, 2006, 225.

¹⁰⁵ Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 349.

¹⁰⁶ Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, Cambridge, 1922, 195.

¹⁰⁷ Tilson, False Prophets in the Old Testament, PhD thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1951, 372–384, 433–436; Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 465–68; Hernando, Sin of the 'False' Prophets, *TD* 27 (1979), 37–40.

¹⁰⁸ Wolff, Wie wird der falsche Prophet erkannt?, in: *Prophetische Alternativen*, München, 1982, 79–80; Schneider, *Krisis des Glaubens*, ThA 46, Berlin, 1988, 85; Herrmann, *Jeremia*, EdF 271, Darmstadt, 1990., *Jeremia*, 140–45, esp. 140. In a similar sense, see Quell's view that there is no essential difference between true and false prophecy, and it is only by means of the spirit that one can discern between them. Quell, *Wahre und falsche Propheten*, BfChTh, Reihe 1, 46/1, Gütersloh, 1952, 206–218, esp. 213.

¹⁰⁹ Wolff, Die eigentliche Botschaft, in: *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie*, ed. Donner, Hanhart, and Smend, Göttingen, 1977, 555.

¹¹⁰ Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, NSBT 29, Nottingham, 2012, 158.

¹¹¹ Sanders, Hermeneutics, in: *Canon and Authority*, ed. Coats and Long, Philadelphia, PA, 1977, 40–41;

usually in contrast with syncretistic practices related to ‘Canaanite’ worship.¹¹² Some go further to stress that ‘[g]enuine prophecy, subservient to Yahweh’s sovereignty, was observant of covenant loyalty, concretized in the demand for radical theonomy in Israel’s public life.’¹¹³ The true prophet respects the freedom of God and recognises that ‘there should be, in matters pertaining to the Truth, an attitude of reticence towards any absolute claims.’¹¹⁴ Who knows, YHWH might change his mind.¹¹⁵ Still others have taken an even more ‘theocentric’ view where the veracity of a prophetic word ‘is not abrogated by the quality of its communicator, whether by a true or a false prophet’ but is ‘measured completely by the effect of the word of God.’¹¹⁶

Closely related to the orthodoxy requirement for ‘true’ prophecy, according to many, is the need for repentance. Scholars have often highlighted the call to repentance as a primary feature of true prophecy; more emphatically, in Stevenson’s words, ‘true prophecy, fundamentally, is a call for repentance.’¹¹⁷ False prophets, by contrast, only reassure with messages of well-being, while true prophets ‘preached of sin and repentance, of punishment and judgment as the necessary way to find salvation.’¹¹⁸ Thus, it is possible to measure the truthfulness of a prophet or his or her message by the response it achieves from its audience, by ‘the impact the prophet makes on his audience: his honesty, his courage, his reliability—the ability to make real to his listeners the experience and message of God.’¹¹⁹ When scholars have noted how close this resembles a fulfilment criterion, they backtrack a little; for example, Moberly contends that a true prophet at least *tries* to

Freedman, *Between God and Man*, in: *Prophecy and Prophets*, ed. Gitay, SemeiaSt 33, 1997, 57–87.

¹¹² Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, Philadelphia, PA, 1962, 210–15.

¹¹³ DeVries, *Prophet against Prophet*, Grand Rapids, MI, 1978, 145.

¹¹⁴ Osuji, *Where Is the Truth?*, BETL 214, Leuven, 2010, 401, cf. 386–87. See also Lys, *Jérémie 28*, *RHPhR* 59 (1979), 479–82; Seybold, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, Urban-Taschenbücher 416, Stuttgart, 1993.

¹¹⁵ Hibbard, True and False Prophecy, *JSOT* 35 (2011), 339–58. Hibbard comments that ‘the predictive capacity of prophecy recedes in favor of a more strident call for changes in religious attitude and political policy. As such, the criterion of fulfillment as an indicator of true prophecy is replaced by prophecy’s function as a source of reform’ (353–54).

¹¹⁶ Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, London, 1985, 143.

¹¹⁷ Stevenson, *False Prophet*, New York/Nashville, 1957, 130. Cf. Marböck, Wort im Widerspruch, in: *Der einfache Mensch in Kirche und Theologie*, ed. Krenn, Linz, 1974, 57–58.

¹¹⁸ Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 213.

¹¹⁹ Freedman, *Between God and Man*, 66. See also the claim that it is ‘peculiar to the Bible’, in contrast to ‘cultures where ecstatic prophecy was the practice,’ that ‘God is influenced by the way people respond to prophecy and has the sovereign right to change the prophecy, to retract the threat.’ Freedman and Frey, *False Prophecy Is True*, in: *Inspired Speech*, ed. Kaltner, Stulman, and Mein, JSOTS 378, London, 2004, 84.

get his audience to repent.¹²⁰ Motives, then, often become a subject of speculation in this view; it is common to see ‘populism’ or a desire for acceptance or profit suggested as impulses for the reassuring words of false prophets.¹²¹

Within a similar framework of theological interpretation, others have taken a literary approach to the theme of false prophecy. Here ‘canonical’ interpretations tend to shift the discussion closer to reception history and interpretive communities who read biblical texts.¹²² Some have focused primarily on Jeremiah, such as Osuji on Jer 26–29¹²³ or Epp-Tiessen on 23.9–29.32,¹²⁴ and argued that the interpretive keys to understanding true and false prophecy are found in the text’s narrative patterns and structure.¹²⁵

1.3.2. Socio-anthropology and ideology

Especially with the work of Crenshaw,¹²⁶ questions regarding ‘false’ prophecy moved in a sociological direction; by shifting his terminology to ‘prophetic conflict’, Crenshaw focused on the social networks and traditions supported or threatened by prophetic messages.¹²⁷ In this reading, the nationalism and populism which others treated in theological terms was understood in increasingly ideological terms.¹²⁸ For socio-anthropological criticism, the model for the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophets becomes inter-group conflict or sectarianism. In Carroll’s words, ‘[o]ur prophets are good, *their* prophets are bad.’¹²⁹ Some of

¹²⁰ In my view, this argument is a rather strained instance of special pleading. See Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 83–88.

¹²¹ Hentschke, *Die Stellung der vorexilischen Schriftpropheten*, BZAW 75, Berlin, 1957, 145–48; Jacob, *Faux prophètes*, *ThZ* 13 (1957), 479–86; Vogels, *Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?*, 694–96.

¹²² See especially Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*; Brenneman, *Canons in Conflict*, New York, 1997; Tarrer, *Reading with the Faithful*, *Journal of Theological Interpretation Supplement* 6, Winona Lake, IN, 2013.

¹²³ Osuji, *Where Is the Truth?*

¹²⁴ Epp-Tiessen, *Concerning the Prophets*, Eugene, OR, 2012.

¹²⁵ Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 140–41. See also Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, in: *Open-Mindedness in the Bible and Beyond*, ed. Korpel and Grabbe, LHBOTS 616, London, 2015, 256.

¹²⁶ Crenshaw identified two trends in scholarship prior to his writing; first, an increasing ‘denial of valid criteria for distinguishing the false from the true prophet,’ and second, a developing appreciation for the ‘human ingredient of all prophecy’. Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 13.

¹²⁷ ‘Diverse traditions within Israel produced their champions, and interpretations of divine activity differed from time to time depending upon sacral traditions deemed normative.’ Crenshaw, *Prophecy, False*, 702.

¹²⁸ Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*; Jeremias, *Vollmacht des Propheten*; Sheppard, *True and False Prophecy*, in: *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation*, ed. Tucker, Petersen, and Wilson, Philadelphia, PA, 1988, 262–82; Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 155–60.

¹²⁹ Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 196. Similarly, see Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*,

the traditional dichotomies still hold true in this view, such as the distinction between salvation and doom prophecy, but in this account the true prophet's role as an oppositional figure is related to an establishment use of salvation prophecy rather than an abstract theological position.¹³⁰ In Wilson's terms, the conflict is determined by social settings, and exists between the 'central' prophets (i.e. cultic *Heilspropheten*) and the 'peripheral' prophets (i.e. free *Unheilspropheten*).¹³¹

In a widely cited article, Nissinen expressed similar ideas in more explicitly ideological terms. He uses the example of two Neo-Assyrian texts, both of which express concern about the potential for prophecy to undermine royal rule. The first, the Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon (SAA 2 6:108–22),¹³² shows a concern for any word spoken against the crown prince. Any person who speaks an 'evil, improper, ugly word' against the regime is suspect. The other text cited by Nissinen is a letter from Nabû-rehtu-ušur, an unknown individual, to Esarhaddon concerning an alleged conspiracy (SAA 16 59 rev. 2'–10').¹³³ In this letter, Nabû-rehtu-ušur reports a prophecy against the king spoken by a slave girl, not as the 'harmless nonsense of some soothsayer' but as something to be taken seriously.¹³⁴ Such words would have been a part of schemes and plots against the reigning king—which, importantly, shows that prophecies against one's own king were not unique to the Israelite prophetic tradition.¹³⁵ In the Neo-Assyrian context, simply put, the issue of false prophecy is an issue of propaganda and of *Realpolitik*; '[e]s kommt nun schließlich darauf an, wer und mit welchem Recht die Macht besitzt, die Wahrheitskriterien zu bestimmen

113–15. Long, Social Dimensions of Prophetic Conflict, *Semeia* 21 (1981), 31–53; Coggins, Prophecy — True and False, in: *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of the Sages*, ed. McKay and Clines, Sheffield, 1993, 80–94. On the specific case of Jeremiah, with special attention to the editing of the book of Jeremiah, see Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 103–24.

¹³⁰ Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias*, WMANT 54, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1981, 107–21. On the existence of a national religious party related to the *Heilspropheten*, see Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels*, II, 2. Auflage, GAT 8/2, Göttingen, 1997.

¹³¹ Wilson, Interpreting Israel's Religion, in: *Sociological Approaches to the Old Testament*, ed. Wilson, Philadelphia, PA, 1984, 339–40.

¹³² The translation of SAA 2 6 cited here is from Parpola and Watanabe, eds., *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths*, SAA 2, Helsinki, 1988, 28–58. See also Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 156–62; Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 150–51.

¹³³ The translation of SAA 16 59 cited here is from Luukko and Buylaere, *Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon*, with contributions by S. Parpola, SAA 16, Helsinki, 2002, 52–53. See also Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 109–11; Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*, 170–72.

¹³⁴ Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 151.

¹³⁵ Nissinen, Das kritischen Potential, in: *Propheten in Mari, Assyrien und Israel*, ed. Köckert, Göttingen, 2003, 1–32. See also Jong, *Isaiah*, 294–318.

und zu sanktionieren.¹³⁶ For Nissinen, this helps to explain texts such as Deut 13.2–6 and 18.20–22 as resting on the issue of exclusive fidelity to YHWH.

1.3.3. Psychology and ecstasy

There are some appeals to psychology and mental states in the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophecy debate. For example, Neher retreats to the assertion that any knowledge of a prophet’s truth was rooted only in the subjective knowledge and experience of the prophet.¹³⁷ Similarly, Moberly at times appears to connect his morality criterion to a change in disposition or consciousness, not in terms of an altered mental state, but an ‘appropriation of God’s will in such a way that one’s vision of the world and of life within it, and one’s conduct correspondingly, is transformed.’¹³⁸

Equating ecstasy with false prophecy is a traditional option. One of the longstanding debates in prophetic scholarship concerns the role of ecstasy in prophetism, especially in its historical development in Israel.¹³⁹ For example, Mowinckel argued that Hebrew ‘nebhi’ism’ originated in earlier ‘Canaanite’ forms of cultic ecstasy and mysticism which were integrated into the Israelite cult, evidence of which can be seen in certain psalms.¹⁴⁰ It was through the reforming prophets of the 8th and 7th centuries BCE that the ecstatic basis of prophetism was overshadowed by a rationalism based on a concept of the word of YHWH.¹⁴¹ In this way Mowinckel understood ‘true’ and ‘false’ prophecy, ori-

¹³⁶ Nissinen, *Falsche Prophetie*, 195. See also Nissinen, *References to Prophecy*, 150–53, 160–62. As Huffmon describes it, ‘[t]he issue is not so much whether the prophecy is “true” or “false,” whether from a deity or not ... but whether the word is inimicable to the king.’ Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, in: *Prophecy in its Ancient Near Eastern Context*, ed. Nissinen, SBLSymS 13, Atlanta, GA, 2000, 62, cf. 67–69. These are aspects of the practical role played by prophecy and other forms of divination in legitimising kingship; see Pongratz-Leisten, *Herrschaftswissen in Mesopotamien*, SAAS 10, Helsinki, 1999, 88–91.

¹³⁷ Neher, *L’essence du prophétisme*, Epiméthée, Paris, 1955, 102.

¹³⁸ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 81.

¹³⁹ See esp. Eissfeldt, *Prophetic Literature*, in: *The Old Testament and Modern Study*, ed. Rowley, Oxford, 1956, 134–45; Lindblom, *Zur Frage des kanaanäischen Ursprungs*, in: *Von Ugarit nach Qumran*, ed. Hempel and Rost, BZAW 77, Berlin, 1958, 89–104; Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 45–104; Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 3., neubearbeitete Auflage, Tübingen, 1964, 102–05; McKane, *Prophecy and the Prophetic Literature*, in: *Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. Anderson, Oxford, 1979, 163–69.

¹⁴⁰ Mowinckel, *Ecstatic Experience*, *AcOr* 13 (1935), 266–67. See also Hölscher, *Die Propheten*, 140–43; Jepsen, *Nabi*, München, 1934, 143–52. Cf. Gunkel, *Ausgewählte Psalmen*, 3. Auflage, Göttingen, 1911, 7–20.

¹⁴¹ Mowinckel, *Ecstatic Experience*, 278. This does not mean, according to Mowinckel, that a mystical element such as a *mysterium tremendum et fascinosum* is excluded from the reforming prophets’ self understanding; rather they sought the ‘certitude of the experience depends on whether it has a definite content, capable of being apprehended by the mind and tested by religious and moral standards.’ Mowinckel, *Ecstat-*

ginating in the reforming prophets' rejection of primitive, ecstatic forms of prophetism, in terms of a contrast between free and cultic prophecy.¹⁴²

Stökl draws a contrast between ecstatic possession and the idea of 'being sent', one of the common litmus tests for a prophet, suggesting that '[s]omeone who is possessed by a spirit or a deity can hardly be said to be sent, as they would no longer be in control of their own behaviour.'¹⁴³ However, it is precisely a kind of compulsion which drives a 'true' prophet to speak, according to Jeremias, 'especially in the respect that he will speak Yahweh's word independent of his own appraisal of its content' as a kind of revelation.¹⁴⁴ For Crenshaw, 'the belief that Yahweh made use of men against their will or knowledge to accomplish his intentions, indeed on occasion sent deceptive visions to further the divine purpose for Israel' only heightened the contrast and tension between 'human limitation and divine sovereignty'.¹⁴⁵

1.3.4. Tradition-history

Another way to approach the problem of 'false' prophecy has been to examine the growth of the literary traditions themselves. By considering the literary growth of the texts, scholars have more closely considered scribal contributions to the biblical accounts. In this view, it is likely the case that many of the so-called 'false prophecy' texts 'originated after the downfall of Jerusalem as a kind of reflection on the past.'¹⁴⁶ Just as the tradition's interpretation of history validates the true prophet for the canonical critic (e.g. Childs), the same is true for the scribes who actually wrote the texts. Here Kratz may serve as a representative example. For him, the major disasters of Israelite history prompted the same reaction in various prophetic texts. In the case of Isaiah, Micah and Hosea, 'der Fall Samari-

ic Experience, 279-80. Cf. Mowinckel, "The Spirit" and the "Word", *JBL* 53 (1934), 207-08. See also Jepsen, *Nabi*, 209-17, 224-27; Seierstad, *Die Offenbarungserlebnisse der Propheten*, 2. Auflage, Oslo, 1965, 156-83; Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy, *VT* 28 (1978), 271-85.

¹⁴² I have mentioned this tendency already above; in addition, see Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 452-56; Stolz, Der Streit um die Wirklichkeit, *WuD* 12 (1973), 9-30.

¹⁴³ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 223.

¹⁴⁴ Jeremias, Remembering and Forgetting, in: *Remembering and Forgetting in Early Second Temple Judah*, ed. Ben Zvi and Levin, Tübingen, 2012, 51-54. Jeremias refers to passages such as Jer 5.14; 6.11; 23.9-12 as indicators of this compulsion.

¹⁴⁵ Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 110. See also Hamori, Spirit of Falsehood, *CBQ* 72 (2010), 15-30.

¹⁴⁶ Jong, Fallacy of "True and False", *JHebScr* 12 (2012), 5; Jong, Rewriting the Past, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Stories*, OTS 65, Leiden, 2015, 138-39.

as den Anstoß zur Bildung der prophetischen Überlieferung’;¹⁴⁷ for Jeremiah, the fall of Jerusalem provided an opportunity for ‘die spätere theologische Deutung des historischen Sachverhalts.’¹⁴⁸ He asserts that the best explanation for these shared phenomena lies in *ex eventu* reflections on the history of Israel, and in the case of ‘false’ prophecy, this also reflected a later development.¹⁴⁹ Where there was once an actual political disagreement between Jeremiah and his rivals, the tradition has transformed it into a theological decision for the reader: ‘Doch nachdem die Geschichte Jeremia Recht gegeben und die anderen als »falsche Propheten« erwiesen hatte, hat die Überlieferung das politische Dilemma in eine theologische Alternative umformuliert: die Entscheidung für oder gegen Jhwh.’¹⁵⁰

A similar position was articulated in the work of Hossfeld and Meyer, as they shifted the discussion of prophetic conflict to the editorial history of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵¹ Where early forms of prophetic conflict existed between cultic and free prophets, later textual interpolations had more to do with conflicting interpretations in the exilic and post-exilic periods. Lange follows largely the same interpretive trajectory, with a more finely tuned account of layers of editorial activity added to the prophets’ *ipsissima verba*;¹⁵² he suggests the so-called ‘end of prophecy’ signalled by texts such as Zech 13.2–6 and Jer 23.33–40 can explain the culmination of prophetic conflict as a rejection of inspired forms of prophecy (*kyrigmatische Prophetie*) in favour of interpretive forms of prophecy (*Tradentenprophetie*). In his account, eventually there was a cessation of prophetic activity in favour of the exegesis of authoritative texts.

Schmitt, rather helpfully, focuses his discussion of these issues on what he calls a discourse concerning legitimate and illegitimate forms of divination.¹⁵³ This discourse stems from the destruction of the first Jerusalem temple and is found in prophetic, histor-

¹⁴⁷ Kratz, *Die Propheten Israels*, München, 2003, 60.

¹⁴⁸ Kratz, *Die Propheten Israels*, 75.

¹⁴⁹ Kratz, *Die Propheten Israels*, 78. Similarly, see Pohlmann, Religion in der Krise, in: *Zerstörungen des Jerusalemer Tempels*, ed. Hahn, unter Mitarbeit von C. Ronning, WUNT 147, Tübingen, 2002, 40–60; Becker, Die Wiederentdeckung des Prophetenbuches, *BThZ* 21 (2004), 30–60.

¹⁵⁰ Kratz, *Die Propheten Israels*, 80.

¹⁵¹ Hossfeld and Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet*; Meyer, *Jeremia und die falschen Propheten*, OBO 13, Göttingen, 1977; Hossfeld, Wahre und falsche Prophetie, *BiKi* 38 (1983), 139–44; Hossfeld, Propheten, Prophetie. II. Biblisch, *LThK* VIII (1999), 630–31.

¹⁵² Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*. Otto, while appreciating his contribution, notes that Lange’s approach rests on a good deal of confidence in his ability to recover the *ipsissima verba* of the prophets. Otto, Antiprophetische Traditionen, *ZABR* 12 (2006), 310.

¹⁵³ See Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, AOAT 411, Münster, 2014, 121–57.

ical and legal texts. The fundamental point of contention concerns the role of institutional (i.e. cultic) forms of divination which supported and legitimised royal power; these forms were contrasted with a romanticised ‘Bild des Propheten als unabhängiger Außen-seiter’ found in the programmatic *Prophetengesetz* of Deut 18.9–22.¹⁵⁴

1.3.5. Summary of debate

Discussions of ‘prophecy’ inevitably concern constructs of the phenomenon, whether literary or social in nature. This is to be expected, and in some debates more than others, this fact can be quite problematic. If each scholar working on a problem has his or her own idea of what the problem is, it becomes increasingly difficult to find common ground in the debate; this recalls to my mind the image of a house built upon shifting sands. In critical scholarship on prophecy, in my view, this is the case of the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate.

I will not be the first to note that the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ debate rests upon problematic ideas about prophecy. Roberts, stating his view rather sharply, describes his dissatisfaction with this debate:

Indeed much of the older discussion of prophetic conflict which often assumed clear and obvious distinctions, sometimes terminologically marked, between true and false prophecy corresponding to such contrasts as cultic versus non-cultic, professional versus non-professional, group versus individual, salvation versus judgment, was never convincing, and deserves to be consigned to oblivion.¹⁵⁵

Without being too polemical about it, I would agree with Roberts’ basic point. Similarly, de Jong classified the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ distinction as a fallacy. Such concepts do not ‘relate to historical prophetic practice’ nor are they ‘at the heart of the biblical prophetic literature either.’ He calls the debate a blending together of various images into a ‘cocktail of

¹⁵⁴ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 123–24. This idealised picture of prophecy asserts that the true prophet ‘kann nur derjenige sein, der wie Mose direkt Gott und sonst niemanden verantwortlich ist und dessen Weissagungen sich in ihrem Eintreffen als wahr erweisen und nicht von staatlichen Autoritäten in ihrem Sinne angestrengt werden’ (123).

¹⁵⁵ Roberts, Blindfolding the Prophets, in: *Oracles et Prophéties dans l'antiquité*, ed. Heintz, Université des Sciences Humaines de Strasbourg, Travaux du Centre de Recherche sur le Proche Orient et la Grèce Antiques 15, Paris, 1997, 138.

“true versus false”.¹⁵⁶ This blended image suggests too much of a sharp contrast between true and false when the realities are much more blurred.

In summary, many of the positions outlined in this survey rest on distinctions that are not native to the prophetic phenomenon. Prophecy is a rather fluid practice that reaches across all of the ‘clear and obvious distinctions’ made in the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ debate. Perhaps it is better, then, to reassess the phenomenon in terms of the *function* of prophecy rather than clearly defined *roles* or *types* corresponding to theological, ideological, social or economic categories.

1.4. Summary

The model of the paradigm shift explains the major differences between contemporary approaches to prophecy and those of a generation ago. It is clear that the prophets of ancient Israel were a part of broader cultural, social and religious pattern of divinatory practices. It is within this ancient framework of intermediation that scholars now try to understand the prophets, whereas the old paradigm often cast them in the mould of Protestant reformers or theologians. As Jeremias put it quite explicitly, the prophets’ concern for the revelatory nature of the divine word is ‘das entscheidende Anliegen mit der Theologie der großen Reformatoren’.¹⁵⁷ The task of recent scholarship has been to re-contextualise the prophets of ancient Israel in the cultural world of the ancient Near East.

Scholars have also clarified the relationship between the textual and social-historical forms of prophecy. The phenomena of biblical prophecy and ancient Israelite prophecy are related, though there is some debate about the nature of this relationship. On the one hand, it is clearly naïve to assume that the biblical portrait exactly corresponds to the ancient social reality. On the other hand, as scholars like Nissinen and Barstad argue, it is productive and illuminating to consider the two phenomena in conversation with one another. By considering how prophecy functioned in ancient society, one can recast some of the intractable debates and problems in the biblical presentation in new a light. The new

¹⁵⁶ Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 29. His views also accord with those of Roberts when he states: ‘The idea that prophecy of judgement and prophecy of salvation were two completely different types of prophecy has been a huge impediment for an adequate view of prophecy as a historical phenomenon. This idea should be abandoned’ (op. cit., p. 26).

¹⁵⁷ Jeremias also compares the possible falsification of prophetic speech with Bonhoeffer’s concept of ‘cheap grace’. Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 349.

appreciation for the *nature* of the social realities of prophecy illustrates the *nature* of prophecy in the biblical text.

Through all of this, two problems still remain. The first relates to the Hebrew lexeme נָבִיא. What does the word mean? So far, this question has been answered with traditional philological methods. It is not clear that these methods provide a sufficient answer. In a related way, another following question must be asked: Does the word have anything to do with the phenomenon of prophecy? To answer this question, one must have an idea in mind of what a prophet *is*.

By focusing on these questions, of what the word נָבִיא means, and of what prophecy is, this investigation reassesses and intervenes in the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate and seeks to reorient the discussion. With a sharper appreciation for the interaction between the constructs of biblical prophecy and ancient Israelite prophecy, my focus throughout is on the foundational aspects of how prophets and prophecy are understood in Jeremiah. The aim is, as I have put it, to provide an account of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah.

2. Methodology

In line with the aims of this work, I have adopted primarily synchronic methods drawn from the fields of semantics and literary theory. Quite deliberately, I have chosen approaches that are widely accepted. My methods are closely interrelated with my aims. In order to understand the function of prophecy in Jeremiah, I have examined both *language* and *text*. In the following, I explain what I mean by ‘semantics’ and ‘close reading’ as methodological approaches.

2.1. Semantics

Semantics, as a branch of semiotics, is the study of meaning, and linguistic semantics is the study of meaning expressed in language.¹⁵⁸ A diverse range of methods and approaches are used in this field, with a number of sub-disciplines and foci, and semantic

¹⁵⁸ See Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, Cambridge, 1995, 1–45. Additional overviews which I have found helpful include Robering, Semantik, in: *Semantik*, ed. Posner, Robering, and Sebeok, HSK 13.1, Berlin, 1997, 83–219; Lappin, Introduction to Formal Semantics, in: *The Handbook of Linguistics*, ed. Aronoff and Rees-Miller, Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics, Oxford, 2003, 369–93; Saeed, Semantics, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistics*, ed. Keith, Routledge Handbooks in Linguistics, London, 2016, 153–68.

methods in biblical studies have their own history and use. Thus it will be beneficial to clarify what is meant by ‘semantics’ in the method of the present work. Related to structural linguistics and semantic field theory, the semantic methods I use here concern the sense relations of words as they function within their linguistic system. According to structuralist semantics, words express meaning only in their use and only in their relations with other words.

There are two primary sources of inspiration for the semantic approach in the present work. First is the work of Saussure and the school of structuralist linguistics associated with him.¹⁵⁹ Several Saussurean principles in structuralist linguistics guide my analysis. In a purely synchronic approach, Saussurean structuralist linguistics makes a critical distinction between language as an abstract system of conventions (*langue*) and speech as the choices made by a speaker in actual use (*parole*).¹⁶⁰ Words function essentially as signs, and the connection between the word (*signifiant*) and the concept (*signifié*). These signs exist in a linguistic system where the differences in value between them are determined by their relation to other signs (i.e. paradigmatics), or in their use in particular utterances (i.e. syntagmatics). Lexical meaning, in the structuralist view, thus is determined by ‘the interdependence of entities, rather than their individual and separate existence.’¹⁶¹ The relational structures of words are described in terms of their association with ‘semantic fields’, which are networks of word meanings where associated linguistic signs stand in relation to one another as they refer to overlapping or partially identical concepts.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Structuralist linguistics finds its classical expression in Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 3e ed. publié par C. Bailly et A. Séchehaye avec la collaboration de A. Riedlinger, Grande Bibliothèque Payot, Paris, 1995. Principles derived from the work of Saussure continues to enjoy profitable use in biblical studies. E.g., see their use in Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, JBS 10, Jerusalem, 2012, 9–10.

¹⁶⁰ Very briefly, it is important to note that there are differences between European and American traditions of structuralist linguistics. Instead of Saussurean terminology, American structural linguistic traditions tend to use terms introduced by Chomsky. Accordingly, rather than ‘langue’ and ‘parole’ one will find the broadly similar terms ‘competence’ and ‘performance’, which Chomsky himself likened to the corresponding Saussurean terms. See Chomsky, *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Cambridge, MA, 1965, 4, passim. Unfortunately, any further discussion of Chomsky and his views go well beyond the bounds of the present study. For an overview which I have used and found helpful, see Joseph, Structural Linguistics, in: *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistics*, ed. Allan, Routledge Handbooks in Linguistics, London, 2016, 431–46.

¹⁶¹ Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 90 (see also 16–22, 89–96, 103–7).

¹⁶² Lyons describes semantic fields as ‘the external, interlexical, relational structures — semantic fields — in which semantically related and interdefinable words, or word-meanings, function as units.’ Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 107. The idea of ‘semantic fields’ is usually accredited to Trier, *Der Wortschatz im*

A second source of inspiration for this study is the work of Barr. Historically speaking, biblical studies owes a great debt to Barr for introducing semantics to the field, and his work remains a touchstone of contemporary scholarship.¹⁶³ It is difficult to understate the importance of his work in this regard. In several influential publications,¹⁶⁴ Barr forcefully advocated for the use of rigorous and consistent methods in the handling of linguistic data. One of the most basic insights he stressed in the study of biblical languages is that words only have meaning in their actual contexts. This involves, according to Barr, a word's syntactic environment,¹⁶⁵ its historical setting,¹⁶⁶ and its place in the lexical inventory of the language.¹⁶⁷ One aspect of his legacy is that semantics has occupied an important place in biblical exegesis since.¹⁶⁸

It is with the work of Saussure and Barr in mind that I understand the concept of 'semantic fields', one of the most prolific and well-known aspects of semantic analysis in biblical scholarship. The concept is a part of an approach to the study of biblical language—for Hebrew perhaps best represented by the Sheffield dictionary¹⁶⁹—which consists of a detailed analysis of the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations shared between words. It is in these relations that semantic meaning is expressed and understood as a part of the language system.

Sinnbezirk des Verstandes, Germanische Bibliothek. Abteilung 2, Untersuchungen und Texte 31, Heidelberg, 1931. See Lyons, *Semantics*, 2 vols., Cambridge, 1977, 250–61.

¹⁶³ For example, see Lambert, *Refreshing Philology*, *BibInt* 24 (2016), 332–56.

¹⁶⁴ Most notably, Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*; Barr, *Comparative Philology*, Oxford, 1968; Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, revised ed., SBT 33, London, 1969.

¹⁶⁵ 'Only within their syntactical environment do words function.' Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, 154.

¹⁶⁶ 'Words can only be intelligibly interpreted by what they meant at the time of their use, within the language system used by the speaker or writer.' Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 139–40.

¹⁶⁷ 'In each language words function in relation to other words in the same or contiguous semantic field. The meaning of מִנְחָה, for instance, can be described only in relation to the other words existing in the Hebrew of a certain time in the field of sacrifice, gift, and tribute. Its meaning is then a choice within a series of possibilities available within Hebrew.' Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 170.

¹⁶⁸ After Barr, other scholars helped semantic analysis grow into a specialised discipline in biblical studies. Important studies include Sawyer, *Semantics in Biblical Research*, SBT 24, London, 1972; Kedar, *Biblische Semantik*, Stuttgart, 1981; Louw, *Semantics of New Testament Greek*, SemeiaSt 11, Atlanta, GA, 1982; Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*, SBLRBS 25, Atlanta, GA, 1992; Silva, *Biblical Words and Their Meaning*, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994. A helpful discussion of a selection of studies in this area is in Groom, *Linguistic Analysis of Biblical Hebrew*, Carlisle, Cumbria, 2003, 116–30. Publications related to the *Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database* project follow semantic principles not unlike those advocated by Barr. See, e.g., Muraoka, ed., *Studies in Ancient Hebrew Semantics*, Abr-Nahrain Supplements 4, Leuven, 1995.

¹⁶⁹ 'Introduction', DCH I, 14–29; II, 9–14; .

In order to remain as clear as possible, I would adopt two basic definitions set forth by Lyons that are based on structuralist principles. By ‘semantic field’ I mean essentially the same concept Lyons describes as the lexical field:

[T]he meaning of any linguistic unit is determined by the paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations which hold between that unit and other linguistic units in a language-system. Lexemes and other units that are semantically related, whether paradigmatically or syntagmatically, within a given language-system can be said to belong to, or to be members of, the same (semantic) field; and a field whose members are lexemes is a lexical field. A lexical field is therefore a paradigmatically and syntagmatically structured subset of the vocabulary (or lexicon).¹⁷⁰

Similarly, he provides a definition of the kinds of sense-relations implied by the terms ‘syntagmatic’ and ‘paradigmatic’. For the most part, I follow Lyons in his definition of these terms:

Sense-relations are of two kinds: substitutional and combinatorial (or, in the Saussurean terms more familiar to linguists, paradigmatic and syntagmatic). Substitutional relations are those which hold between intersubstitutable members of the same grammatical category; combinatorial relations hold typically, though not necessarily, between expressions of different grammatical categories (e.g. between nouns and adjectives, between verbs and adverbs, etc.), which can be put together in grammatically well-formed combinations (or constructions).¹⁷¹

The terminology I employ is drawn from commonly accepted descriptions of Hebrew grammar, syntax, poetic techniques, and genre. Thus ‘syntagmatic’ relations will relate to grammatical and syntactical patterns and uses of the word, and ‘paradigmatic’ relations

¹⁷⁰ Lyons, *Semantics*, I, 268. Cf. Ullmann, *Principles of Semantics*, 2nd ed., 3rd impression, Glasgow University Publications 84, Oxford, 1963, 152-70.

¹⁷¹ Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 124.

are primarily lexical.¹⁷² I have not worked with a rigid set of conceptual fields; rather I discuss terms according to broad semantic categories drawn from modern lexica.¹⁷³

It must be clear from the outset that all semantic analysis of this kind is provisional by its very nature. This is not only due to the limitations imposed by the nature of the corpus of Classical Hebrew,¹⁷⁴ but also to the nature of the text corpus chosen for this study. The Hebrew Bible is a heavily edited document written in dead languages from a distant and ancient culture only fragmentarily attested. For the modern scholar, only an approximate understanding of the conceptual world of a speaker of Classical Hebrew is possible. This point, I fear, does not appear to be taken into account often enough. Strictly speaking, the conclusions of this investigation will be provisionally relevant for the corpus, namely the Hebrew edition of Jeremiah (BHS).¹⁷⁵

Finally, it is methodologically critical that a semantic analysis derive from the conceptual world of the language being studied. It is for this reason I have chosen the lexeme **נְבִיא** as the starting point of this work. This avoids the risk of a circular argument by beginning with a domain, such as ‘prophecy’, which is itself a construct. Thus I have chosen to begin with the lexeme **נְבִיא** and describe the semantic field(s) related to it.

¹⁷² In this regard I follow similar methods outlined in DCH and entries in the *Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database*. In the case of a noun, ‘syntagmatic’ analysis focuses on subject-object relationships with verbs, related nouns, modifying adjectives and prepositional phrases (‘Introduction’, in: DCH I, 20). These are basically parts of the ‘ordered and unified arrangement of words or word elements in the linear flow of speech’ (IBHS §3.3.3a). ‘Paradigmatic’ analysis focuses on associations between words, noting ‘parallel’ words, and identifying synonyms, antonyms, and contextually associated words. See ‘Introduction’, in: DCH I, 14–22; Muraoka, *Semantics of Ancient Hebrew*, Abr-Nahrain Supplements 6, Leuven, 1998, ix–xii; Aitken, *Semantics of Blessing and Cursing*, ANES 23, Louvain, 2007, 37–41.

¹⁷³ I have referred to DCH in this regard. A useful discussion of semantic domains is in Nida and Louw, *Lexical Semantics*, 107–14.

¹⁷⁴ On the limited nature of Biblical Hebrew as a language, see Ullendorff, *Is Biblical Hebrew a Language?*, BSOAS 34 (1971), 241–55; Knauf, *War “Biblisch-Hebräisch” eine Sprache?*, ZAH 3 (1990), 11–23. The two sources of linguistic data for semantics, according to Cruse, are spoken and written outputs and intuitive judgments of native speakers. Since ‘the native language-user is central to both of them’, he comments: ‘Probably the most disadvantaged researchers in this respect in the field of linguistic semantics are those who study “dead” languages. Often virtually the only direct evidence available to them is a corpus of written utterances, of somewhat fortuitous make-up, and now probably fixed for eternity.’ Cruse, *Lexical Semantics*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics, Cambridge, 1986, 9. Given the additional complexities regarding text, culture and history, the gravity of this disadvantage in Hebrew Bible studies must not be underestimated. See Loader, *Job and Cognition in Context*, in: *Job* 28, ed. Woude, BibInt 64, Leiden, 2003, 321–29.

¹⁷⁵ Barr, *Scope and Problems*, ZAH 6 (1993), 5–6.

2.2. Close reading

In criticism and literary theory, close reading is a method closely associated with New Criticism, an approach to the study of English literature from roughly 1900–1960.¹⁷⁶ Inspired in part by Russian formalism, the New Critics sought to establish procedures in the study of literature free from historicism and ‘scientific’ in their own right. Developments and changes in criticism during the 20th century are complex, to say the least, and they are well-documented elsewhere.¹⁷⁷ Here I will survey the rise of the method of close reading, in literary theory and in biblical studies, and provide a brief account its contemporary usage.

The so-called New Critics did not comprise a ‘school’ or ‘movement’ in any formal sense; they also did not share one particular ‘method’ or technique. In Brooks’ words, their ‘only common trait was their reaction against the reigning historicism and their renewed respect for the structure and inner workings of the poem or novel or drama in question.’¹⁷⁸ No one thinker represents New Criticism in total, but the approach was associated with a constellation of writers in Britain and in America. Taken together, the proponents of New Criticism tended to share certain points of emphasis, namely,

- (a) the autonomy of the work; (b) the total experience of the work; (c) the organic, internally unified nature of the individual work; (d) the importance of complexity, and especially irony and paradox, which are harmonized in the work but not necessarily resolved; (e) the need for close scrutiny of diction, syntax, metaphor, and im-

¹⁷⁶ Ransom first used ‘New Criticism’ as a name in the title of his seminal book, Ransom, *The New Criticism*, Norfolk, CT, 1941. See also Wimsatt and Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon*, Lexington, KY, 1954. For overviews of New Criticism and related concepts, see Brooks, *The Rich Manifold*, edited by J. M. Ditta and R. S. Librach, Columbia, MO, 1983; Harris, New Criticism, in: *Dictionary of Concepts in Literary Criticism and Theory*, Reference Sources for the Social Sciences and Humanities 12, Westport, CT, 1992, 266–74; Childs, New Criticism, in: *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory*, ed. Makaryk, Toronto, 1993, 120–24; Meredith, Anglo-American New Criticism, in: *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Castle, general editor M. Ryan, London, 2011, 34–41; Petrov, Formalism, in: *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Castle, general editor M. Ryan, London, 2011, 188–97.

¹⁷⁷ See, e.g., Selden, ed., *From Formalism to Poststructuralism*, Cambridge, 1995; Litz, Menand, and Rainey, eds., *Modernism and the New Criticism*, Cambridge, 2000; Knellwolf and Norris, eds., *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, IX, Cambridge, 2001.

¹⁷⁸ Brooks, *The Rich Manifold*, 39. For a historical overview of literary criticism in America and Britain during the early 20th century, see Martin, Criticism and the Academy, in: *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. Litz, Menand, and Rainey, Cambridge, 2000, 269–321.

agery; and (f) the responsibility of the critic to make critical judgments.¹⁷⁹

Thus, the guiding principle of this critical perspective was a central concern for the poem (i.e. the literary work) itself, rather than a conventional 'method' *per se*. Along with a concern for the autonomy of the poem, New Critics downplayed authorship and reception in their approach. This was made (in)famous in the 'fallacies' of intention and affect argued by Wimsatt and Beardsley. For them, the result of a focus on these fallacies 'is that the poem itself, as an object of specifically critical judgment, tends to disappear.'¹⁸⁰ For the New Critics, asserting the autonomy of the poem and establishing formal procedures of literary analysis freed the study of literature as a discipline from history or psychology. Hence, one of the most significant legacies of New Criticism is the introduction of formal, scientific method in the study of (English) literary works as a corrective against historicism and romanticism.¹⁸¹ Its dominance in literary theory began to fade in the 1960's with the rise of poststructuralism and deconstruction, and more recently, new historicism and culture studies.¹⁸²

Close reading is one of the hallmarks of New Criticism, and Richards declared that 'all respectable poetry invites close reading'.¹⁸³ For the most part, close reading 'entails a scrupulous attention to textual detail and to the contradictions, ambiguities, and tensions that constitute the poem as a self-contained "verbal icon."¹⁸⁴ This attention, or interpretation of a work, as Eliot describes it, 'is only legitimate when it is not interpretation at all, but merely putting the reader in possession of facts which he would otherwise have

¹⁷⁹ Harris, *New Criticism*, 267. These tendencies

¹⁸⁰ Wimsatt and Beardsley, *The Verbal Icon*, 21. This view is articulated further in the pair of essays, 'The Intentional Fallacy', op. cit., pp. 3–18, and 'The Affective Fallacy', op. cit., 21–39. Not all

¹⁸¹ As Gallop describes it, 'when New Criticism took over English studies, it injected methodological rigor into what had been a gentlemanly practice of amateur history.' Gallop, *Historicization of Literary Studies, Profession 2007* (2007), 183. New Criticism enjoyed great success and exerted enormous influence, partly due to the wide use of their approaches as pedagogical tools in higher education. On the significance of New Criticism for the study of English in the American university, see, e.g., Gallop, *Historicization of Literary Studies*; Meredith, *Anglo-American New Criticism*, 33–34.

¹⁸² Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism*, Chicago, 1980, 3–26; Salkeld, *New Historicism*, in: *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, ed. Knellwolf and Norris, Cambridge, 2001, 59–70; Leitch, *Introduction to Theory and Criticism*, in: *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Leitch, 2nd ed., New York, 2010, 1–33; Robson, *New Historicism*, in: *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Eaglestone, general editor M. Ryan, London, 2011, 746–53.

¹⁸³ Richards, *Practical Criticism*, London, 1929, 203.

¹⁸⁴ Meredith, *Anglo-American New Criticism*, 38.

missed.¹⁸⁵ In other words, the poem has an irreducibility which the critic must respect, lest he or she succumb to the 'heresy of paraphrase'.¹⁸⁶

Biblical criticism adopted the approaches and methods of New Criticism in a wave of literary studies in the 1980's.¹⁸⁷ According to Barton, close reading operates in the discipline by 'analysing how the author/editor achieves his effects, why he arranges his material the way he does, and above all what devices he uses to give unity and coherence to his work'.¹⁸⁸ A kind of biblical formalism came to regard 'the self-contained, unified text as the *primary* focus of interpretation', rather than the author's historical, biographical or cultural influences, or the impact of a work on an audience or implied reader.¹⁸⁹ Of course, reception history and reader response criticism are two examples of developments in a different hermeneutical direction.

In usual practice among biblicists, close reading is a label for studies which are either exclusively or primarily synchronic and which aside issues regarding composition, redaction or literary growth of a given text.¹⁹⁰ Quite often, scholars use close reading together with a concept of the text's 'final form' made popular in the canonical criticism of Childs.¹⁹¹ However, any text can be 'closely read' as a way to explore its meaning, and one does not need to claim an alleged 'final form' of the text—a highly problematic idea—for this kind of approach.¹⁹² There are other avenues for making use of close reading as a methodological approach, and it is possible to go beyond the rather unfortunate, in my view, debate between 'synchronic' and 'diachronic' methods.

Not all of the New Critics were so dogmatic in their rejection of context. One major example is Empson's use of close reading, which makes broad use of culture and context in his analysis; for him, close analysis 'is insufficient unless embedded in historical, bio-

¹⁸⁵ Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 2nd ed., London, 1934, 32.

¹⁸⁶ See the essay by the same name in Brooks, *The Well Wrought Urn*, London, 1947, 176-96.

¹⁸⁷ See, e.g., the pioneering works by Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, London, 1981; Berlin, *Poetics*, JSOTS 9, Sheffield, 1983; Sternberg, *Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, Bloomington, IN, 1985.

¹⁸⁸ Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, London, 1984. Similarly, see the simple description of a method which seeks to 'read and understand' in Barstad, *What Prophets Do*, 19.

¹⁸⁹ Resseguie, *Formalist/New Critical Interpretation*, in: *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, ed. Porter, London, 2007, 114-15.

¹⁹⁰ Exum and Clines, eds., *New Literary Criticism*, JSOTS 143, Sheffield, 1993.

¹⁹¹ See esp. Childs, *Introduction*, Philadelphia, PA, 1979, 69-83, esp. 75-77.

¹⁹² See, for example, Barton, *Reading Texts Holistically*, in: *Congress Volume Ljubljana 2007*, ed. Lemaire, VTS 133, Leiden, 2010, esp. 379.

graphical, and sociocultural contexts of meaning.¹⁹³ Consider, for example, his statement that

A student of literature ought to be trying all the time to empathize with the author (and of course the assumptions and conventions by which the author felt himself bound); to tell him that he cannot even partially succeed is about the most harmful thing you could do.¹⁹⁴

Consequently, the method of close reading has not always necessarily been moored in formalist criticism in the bent of Brooks or Ransom. While not called ‘close readings’ as such, the careful attention paid to tensions, ambiguities and ideologies in texts in deconstructionist and poststructuralist criticism closely resembles the method and demonstrates its ideological flexibility;¹⁹⁵ rather than ‘challenge the centrality of close reading to English’, these theoretical perspectives ‘infused it with new zeal.’¹⁹⁶ No one critical perspective can claim disciplined attention to detail as its exclusive domain.

I have adopted the method of close reading and a primarily literary approach because of *what* I understand myself to read. It is not my aim or interest to make claims about textual development, literary cohesion, editorial/authorial intention, or narrative shaping. Rather, I use these methods in order to explore the relationship between the phenomena of biblical and ancient Near Eastern prophecy. I am convinced that literary methods must not succumb to an ‘historical aporia.’¹⁹⁷ Thus, without being a ‘comparative’ investigation, this work does not ignore the contours of Jeremiah’s ancient culture and context.

3. Structure

I have divided the present investigation into two parts. This is to allow both aspects of the methodology, the semantics and close reading, to receive a full treatment. In the first part, I make extensive use of semantic analysis focused primarily on the syntagmatic and

¹⁹³ Fothergill, Empson, William, in: *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory*, ed. Castle, general editor M. Ryan, London, 2011, 172. Cf. Empson, *Structure of Complex Words*, London, 1951.

¹⁹⁴ Empson, *Using Biography*, London, 1984, viii. Here Empson has Wimsatt in view; cf. op. cit., p. 104.

¹⁹⁵ Meredith, *Anglo-American New Criticism*, 40.

¹⁹⁶ Gallop, *Historicization of Literary Studies*, 182.

¹⁹⁷ As rightly observed in Barstad, *What Prophets Do*, 31. See also Becking, *No More Grapes from the Vineyard?*, in: *From David to Gedaliah*, ed. Becking, OBO 228, Göttingen, 2007, 35–51.

paradigmatic relations of נביא in Jeremiah. The goal here is to describe the semantic field of נביא. In the second part, three chapters each provide close readings of texts in Jeremiah which are particularly focused on prophecy and prophets. This analysis is primarily exegetical in nature; the goal is to expound the ways in which this literature describes, understands and explores the nature of prophecy.

Both parts make explicit their use of a given method, but both also are engaged in the same hermeneutical operation. That is to say, both parts are focused on the question of the nature of prophecy in mutually supporting ways. Just as there are exegetical concerns in the first part which contribute to the semantic analysis, *vice versa*, there are semantic concerns which guide the exegetical analysis.

Two basic insights guide this rationale. First, it is critical to recognise that one cannot perform a ‘word study’ in order to explain the nature of prophecy. Neither can one expect to explain a phenomenon simply by defining it. Both the literary presentation and the social reality of prophecy are constructs which represent a variety of activities, behaviours, functions and ideas. To explain the phenomenon of prophecy, it is simply insufficient to focus exclusively on the terms used for prophets. On the one hand, it is true that the lexeme נביא plays a crucial part in the construct of prophecy in the book; on the other, it does not reveal all there is to know about prophecy in the book.

Second, in order to discuss the meaning of a word, its semantics is only a necessary first step. Though semantic methods have been hugely influential in the way word meaning is understood, it is still necessary to account for the context in which it is used. As Barr puts it, ‘the meaning of a vocabulary item is a function both of the item itself and of the item as occurrent in various contexts.’¹⁹⁸ An analysis of the semantics of נביא is worthwhile in its own right, but incomplete insofar as it tells us about the phenomenon of prophecy.¹⁹⁹ Likewise, in the most basic sense, all biblical exegesis involves the study of words. It is implicit, then, that exegetical discussions of the text involve an account of word meaning. So, in the present study, the first part of the work is an account of the meaning of the ‘item itself’, that is the lexeme נביא; the second part is an account of the ‘item as occurrent in various contexts’, that is, the literary settings of the chosen pericopes.

¹⁹⁸ Barr, *Semantics of Biblical Language*, 38.

¹⁹⁹ Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 52.

The methods, structure, and title of this investigation, therefore, are all connected to the same question: How does prophecy work? It is the *function* of prophets and prophecy that is the primary interest here, both in linguistic terms (i.e. semantics), and in hermeneutic terms (i.e. in close readings of particular texts). It is with this combination of methods that I argue that basic conceptions of prophecy and the function of prophets in Jeremiah are, too often, insufficiently understood. With both semantics and close reading, I am able to describe the function of prophets in a fresh perspective absent in contemporary scholarship until now.

4. Corpus

Perhaps no choice is more important in a scholarly work than the selection of its corpus. Why Jeremiah? And perhaps more crucially, *which* Jeremiah? It is well known that the book has a complex textual history; this is most evident in the fact that Greek text forms of Jeremiah have approximately one-sixth less material than the Hebrew,²⁰⁰ and likely represent an earlier edition. Some may find the decision to read the Hebrew edition a bit controversial.

I base my choice of text on two main considerations. The first is practical. I have chosen a primarily synchronic method partly because I do not wish to ground my argument in text-critical matters. These matters are particularly fraught; text-critical data in Jeremiah are interpreted in different ways by competing models of the text's growth.²⁰¹ Because it is my primary aim to explain the nature and function of prophecy in the texts, I have set aside text-critical and composition-critical issues. I should hasten to add, however, that this is not a 'fundamentalist' statement of general preference or implied superiority of one version over another.

My second consideration is more theoretical, as it arises from my use of semantic methods. For a structuralist semantic method, it is absolutely essential to consider the meaning of a lexeme within its linguistic system. The Italian maxim *traduttore, traditore* ('translation is treason') or the Hungarian *fordítás, ferdítés* ('translation is distortion') are

²⁰⁰ See Tov, *Textual Criticism*, 3rd ed., Minneapolis, MN, 2012, 287.

²⁰¹ Tigchelaar notes that Bogaert and Tov ('two literary editions'), McKane ('rolling corpus') and Lundbom ('textual corruption') all interpret the same text-critical evidence for their own compositional models. Tigchelaar, *Jeremiah's Scriptures in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, in: *Jeremiah's Scriptures*, ed. Najman and Schmid, JSJS 173, Leiden, 2017, 289-291, cit. 290.

distillations of this principle, that there is always a loss of meaning in translation equivalents. Since one of my aims is to describe the meaning of the Hebrew lexeme נְבִיא, it is imperative to work with a Hebrew text. As Barr puts it in his discussion of philological methods, ‘the very high importance which attaches to the ancient versions does not alter the fact that they are not Hebrew manuscripts. The effect they have upon our thinking is, in respect of directness and complexity, quite different from the effect of manuscript evidence in Hebrew.’²⁰² Since the language of Jeremiah, as Hornkohl has argued, seems to reflect good usage for the 6th and 5th centuries BCE,²⁰³ there is not much advantage to disregarding the Hebrew version, especially in terms of word meaning.²⁰⁴ Getting ‘closer to the original’, so to speak, reflects a different set of concerns for the study of prophecy, especially in the search for the *ipsissima verba* of the prophets. There is much to learn about the nature of prophecy in the Hebrew version of Jeremiah.

For my text, I take the Masoretic version of Jeremiah in the critical edition BHS as the primary text of study.²⁰⁵ I have also adopted a practical method for reading BHS. Because it is a critical text edition, it is necessary to work with the textual apparatus. It is simply a part of the ‘text’ which is being read. As is well-known, however, the *apparatus criticus* has suffered severe criticism for the varying degree of relevance of some of its material.²⁰⁶ To negotiate this difference, I have restricted myself only to commenting on editorial instructions in the apparatus (e.g. *lege, delendum, insere*). For each of my primary texts, I reproduce the consonantal text of BHS, comment on the critical apparatus’ views, and offer an original translation. Since I make no claims about an ‘original’ text or reading, issues related to philology, grammar, syntax and Ketiv/Qere are of primary concern for my translation and textual commentary.

²⁰² Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 2.

²⁰³ Hornkohl, *Ancient Hebrew Periodization*, SStLL 74, Leiden, 2014, 372.

²⁰⁴ We also know that the word נְבִיא was in use at this time. See Barstad, Lachish Ostrakon III.

²⁰⁵ Despite its flaws BHS is a foundational part of scholarly discourse as the only complete critical edition of the Hebrew Bible. Though I have not directly referred to it in this study, I have consulted the excellent *Hebrew University Bible* edition of Jeremiah edited by Rabin and Talmon; see Rabin, Talmon, and Tov, eds., *Jeremiah*, Hebrew University Bible Project, Jerusalem, 1997. The editions of Jeremiah in *Biblia Hebraica Quinta* or *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Edition* (formerly *Oxford Hebrew Bible*) are yet to appear.

²⁰⁶ See esp. Goshen-Gottstein, *Theory and Practice of Textual Criticism*, *Textus* 3 (1963), 130–58; Wevers, *Text History and Text Criticism*, in: *Congress Volume Göttingen 1977*, ed. International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, VTS 29, Leiden, 1978, 392–402.

For the semantic analysis, I analyse every instance of the lexeme נביא in the book of Jeremiah. I have selected the primary texts in Jeremiah for close reading based on my own subjective judgment. Each in their own way, however, has played an important role in the issues and debates outlined above (§1.3). These texts, Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17, illustrate salient and significant aspects of the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah: 1.4–19 is a positive description of the prophetic function; 23.9–40 criticises prophets and offers perspective on expectations regarding prophecy; and 27.1–28.17 narrates an encounter between prophets with opposing prophetic messages. Each of these texts also allow contextual space for me to illustrate the exegetical impact of the semantic discussion.

5. Aims

After surveying the main problems involved in the study of ‘prophecy in Jeremiah, it is left to conclude with brief remarks about the course of analysis to follow. Current research has not yet approached the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah with a semantic method, and current debates are in need of an intervention.

The starting point of this investigation is a semantic analysis of the lexeme נביא. In chapter two, I organise and categorise all occurrences of the lexeme נביא in Jeremiah. Insights drawn from the field of lexical semantics guide this analysis. This allows for the construction and interpretation of the semantic field of נביא. It also provides its relationships with other words, themes and concepts.

In the following chapters, I perform close readings of key texts for the nature of prophecy. Chapter three is a close reading of Jeremiah 1.4–19, chapter four is a close reading of Jeremiah 23.9–40, and chapter five is a close reading of Jeremiah 27.1–28.17. This part of the work describes and explains the nature and function of prophecy in these texts. Though not an ‘historical’ or ‘comparative’ investigation, my readings of the text remain attuned to issues of social and cultural context. The semantic part of the work is like a foundation hewn from rock, and the close readings build a house upon it.

In the concluding chapter, I summarise the total findings of the investigation. Conclusions drawn from these findings, then, are applied to current debates in scholarship. At the end, I will have provided my account of how prophecy works in the book of Jeremiah.

Part I. Semantics

Chapter 2. Semantic analysis of נביא in Jeremiah

For the study of prophecy in ancient Israel, no single word is more central or significant than the lexeme נביא. In Jeremiah, it is the most fundamental word associated with prophecy in the book.²⁰⁷ While a great number of studies have examined נביא with primarily historical and philological methods,²⁰⁸ exceedingly few make use of semantic analysis or base their approach on principles of semantics.²⁰⁹ The following study seeks to fill this gap in the scholarly literature.

I. Nominal forms of נביא ('prophet')

The nominal lexeme נביא occurs 95 times in 85 verses in Jeremiah.²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ There are 135 occurrences of words which derive from נבא in Jeremiah, found in 1.5, 2.8, 26, 30; 4.9; 5.13, 31; 6.13; 7.25; 8.1, 10; 13.13; 14.13, 14, 15 (x2), 18; 18.18; 20.2; 23.9, 11, 13, 14, 15 (x2), 16, 21, 25, 26 (x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37; 25.2, 4; 26.5, 7, 8, 11, 16; 27.9, 14, 15, 16, 18; 28.1, 5 (x2), 6, 8 (x2), 9 (x4), 10 (x2), 11, 12 (x2), 15 (x2), 17; 29.12, 8, 15, 19, 29; 32.2, 32; 34.6; 35.15; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13, 19 (x2); 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 44.4; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51.59. Statistics of this kind in this chapter are drawn from Even-Shoshan and Lisowsky, *Konkordanz zum hebräischen Alten Testament*, Stuttgart, 1958.

²⁰⁸ Among the most recent publications, see especially Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 171-92; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 29-42. Other influential studies include Jepsen, *Nabi*; Guillaume, *Prophecy and Divination*, BaL, London, 1938, 107-41; Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 95-104; Ramlot, *Prophétisme*, 914-43; Fleming, *Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabî*; Fleming, *Nabû and Munabbiātu*; Pomponio, *Nabû. A. Philologisch*, RLA IX (1998), 16-24; Huehnergard, *Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew nabî*.

²⁰⁹ See the entries in DCH for נבא vb. prophesy (V, 582-83), נבואָה n.f. prophecy (V, 584), נביא n.m. prophet (V, 587-91) and נביאָה n.f. prophet (V, 592). DCH is an extremely useful and important source of data for analysing Hebrew lexemes, and these articles are no exception. There is an entry for נביא in the *Semantics of Ancient Hebrew Database* as well; see Stökl, *נביא/נביאָה*, SAHD. *DBHE* makes use of a semantic approach ('Introduction', 7-17), and very brief entries can be found for נביא and related forms (*DBHE*, 472-73). While not strictly based on semantic methods, the major theological dictionaries provide very helpful linguistic data. See especially Jeremias, *נביא*, THAT II; Müller, *נביא*, ThWAT V. In a different but related context, see Xeravits, *נבא*, ThWQ II (2013), 847-52.

²¹⁰ Jer 1.5; 2.8, 26, 30; 4.9; 5.13, 31; 6.13; 7.25; 8.1, 10; 13.13; 14.13, 14, 15(x2), 18; 18.18; 20.2; 23.9, 11, 13, 14, 15(x2), 16, 21, 25, 26(x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37; 25.2, 4; 26.5, 7, 8, 11, 16; 27.9, 14, 15, 16, 18; 28.1, 5(x2), 6, 8, 9(x3), 10(x2), 11, 12(x2), 15(x2), 17; 29.1(x2), 8, 15, 19, 29; 32.2, 32; 34.6; 35.15; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13, 19; 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 44.4; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51.59. On the term 'lexeme', see Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics*, 48-54.

1.1. Morphology

The lexeme **נְבִיא** is a masculine *qātīl* pattern noun derived from the root **נבא**.²¹¹ Of the total number of occurrences, 47 are singular and 43 are plural.²¹² Two forms include possessive suffixes: **נְבִיאֵיכֶם** (Jer 2.30; 27.9, 16; 29.8; 37.19) and **נְבִיאֵיהֶם** (2.26; 32.32).

1.2. Syntagmatic data

The syntagmatic data offered here is primarily restricted to syntax on the levels of phrase, clause and sentence.²¹³ This means I have restricted my focus to particular collocations that use **נְבִיא** (Table 1), verbs where **נְבִיא** is subject (Table 2), verbs that take **נְבִיא** as an object (Table 3), and participles that describe **נְבִיא** (Table 4). For each of these categories I have listed the lexemes and collocations alphabetically and included basic information, for example, grammatical form and a simple gloss.²¹⁴ After each table I have offered some comments on the semantic information to be gleaned from the syntagmatic data.

²¹¹ The morphological forms found in Jeremiah are: **נְבִיא** (Jer 1.5; 14.18; 23.11); **הַנְּבִיא** (20.2; 23.28, 33, 37; 25.2; 28.1 [x2], 5 [x2], 6, 9 [x3], 11, 12 [x2], 15 [x2], 17; 29.1, 29; 32.2; 34.6; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13; 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51.59); **וְהַנְּבִיא** (23.34); **מִנְּבִיא** (8.10; 18.18); **וּמִנְּבִיא** (6.13); **נְבִיאִים** (27.18; 29.15); **וְהַנְּבִיאִים** (5.31; 13.13; 14.13, 14, 15 [x2]; 23.15, 16, 21, 25, 26, 30, 31; 25.4; 26.5, 16; 27.14; 28.8; 29.1, 19; 35.15); **וְהַנְּבִיאִים** (2.8; 4.9; 5.13; 26.7, 8, 11; 27.15); **לְנְבִיאִים** (23.9); **נְבִיאִי** (23.15); **וְנְבִיאִי** (23.26); **וּנְבִיאִי** (23.13, 14); **נְבִיאֵיכֶם** (2.30; 27.9, 16; 29.8; 37.19); **וְנְבִיאֵיהֶם** (2.26; 32.32). The root *nb'* is attested in KAI 193.19–20; see DNWSI II, 711. See the comments on **נְבִיא** in Barr, *Etymology and the Old Testament*, in: *Language and Meaning*, ed. Woude, OTS 19, Leiden, 1974, 17.

²¹² Singular forms found in Jeremiah are: **נְבִיא** (Jer 1.5; 14.18; 23.11); **הַנְּבִיא** (20.2; 23.28, 33, 37; 25.2; 28.1 [x2], 5 [x2], 6, 9 [x3], 10 [x2], 11, 12 [x2], 15 [x2], 17; 29.1, 29; 32.2; 34.6; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13; 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51.59); **וְהַנְּבִיא** (23.34); **מִנְּבִיא** (8.10; 18.18); **וּמִנְּבִיא** (6.13). Plural forms found in the book are: **נְבִיאִים** (27.18; 29.15); **וְהַנְּבִיאִים** (5.31; 13.13; 14.13, 14, 15 [x2]; 23.15, 16, 21, 25, 26, 30, 31; 25.4; 26.5, 16; 27.14; 28.8; 29.1, 19; 35.15); **וְהַנְּבִיאִים** (2.8; 4.9; 5.13; 26.7, 8, 11; 27.15); **לְנְבִיאִים** (23.9); **נְבִיאִי** (23.15); **וְנְבִיאִי** (23.26); **וּנְבִיאִי** (23.13, 14); **נְבִיאֵיכֶם** (2.30; 27.9, 16; 29.8; 37.19); **וְנְבִיאֵיהֶם** (2.26; 32.32).

²¹³ See IBHS §3.3.4. The influence of my own interpretive decision-making is inevitable, but every effort is made to make these decisions clear and apparent to the reader. My approach differs from that of Stökl, who lists syntagmatic data and includes verbs which 'are used with characters who in the same pericope are described as a **נְבִיא(ה)**'. See Stökl, **נְבִיא/נְבִיאָה**, SAHD, §3, A.2.

²¹⁴ Quantitative analysis, like frequency of appearances, must be weighted against qualitative analysis. The significance of syntactic relationships between words must be established exegetically, which always involves a hermeneutical process.

1.2.1. Collocations with נביא

One of the first places to look for semantic information the lexeme נביא are collocations. These are simply short phrases, which can be either unique or frequent, that provide some semantic context for the lexeme.²¹⁵ In Table 1 are a series of collocations which deserve some further comment.

Table 1. Collocations with נביא

Collocation	Position	References
אזני ירמיהו הנביא	x1 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 29.29
איה נביאיכם	x1	Jer 37.19
גם נביא גם כהן	x2	Jer 14.18; 23.11
דבר הנביא	x1 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 28.9
דברי נביאים	x2 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 23.16; 27.14
חנניה הנביא	x6 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 28.1, 5, 10, 12, 15, 17
ירמיהו (ו) הנביא	x31 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 20.2; 25.2; 28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15; 29.1, 29; 32.2; 34.6; 36.8, 26; 37.2, 3, 6, 13; 38.9, 10, 14; 42.2, 4; 43.6; 45.1; 46.1, 13; 47.1; 49.34; 50.1; 51-59
כהניהם ונביאיהם	x2	Jer 2.26; 32.32
כל עבדי (עבדיו) הנביאים	x6 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4
לב הנבאים	x1 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 23.26
נבאי ירושלם	x2 <i>nomen regens</i>	Jer 23.14, 15
נבאים הם	x1	Jer 27.18
נביא לגוים	x1	Jer 1.5
נביאי שמרון	x1 <i>nomen regens</i>	Jer 23.13
נביאי תרמת	x1 <i>nomen regens</i>	Jer 23.26
נביאיכם אשר בקרבכם	x1 <i>nomen regens</i>	Jer 29.8
עצמות נביאים	x1 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 8.1
צואר ירמיה הנביא	x2 <i>nomen rectum</i>	Jer 28.10, 12

²¹⁵ The term 'collocation' simply refers to a combination of words that is not random.

The most frequent collocations with **נביא** involve proper names. In nearly half of all occurrences of **נביא** in Jeremiah the lexeme is *nomens rectum* in a phrase '[Proper Name], the prophet'. Only two individuals are named in these constructions. **ירמיהו הנביא** occurs 31 times in Jeremiah, and **חנניה הנביא** occurs six times.²¹⁶ From this total, a dozen of these occurrences are found in the narrative in Jer 28.1–17, the only pericope in Jeremiah with multiple named prophets. Jeremiah is referred to as **הנביא** in formulaic introductions to oracles concerning Judah and Jerusalem (25.1–11), Zedekiah's fate (34.1–7), Egypt (46.1, 13), Elam (49.34), Philisia (47.1) and Babylon (50.1).²¹⁷ The appellative also is used of Jeremiah in the address of his letter to the Judean deportees (29.1), and the Baruch and Seraiah colophons (45.1; 51.59). It is also found in narrative episodes such as the conflict with the priest Pashhur (20.1–6), Jeremiah's purchase of a field (32.1–44), Baruch's reading from Jeremiah's scroll (36.1–32), Jeremiah's interactions with Zedekiah and royal officials (37.1–38.28), and Jeremiah's interactions with Johanan ben Kareah (42.1–43.13). It is difficult to say if there is a pattern to this usage beyond marking 'official' business. That is, they reflect situations where Jeremiah's activity concerns public interest, or when it would be important to note the status of the actors involved.²¹⁸

Several collocations combine the lexemes **נביא** and **כהן**. While the precise collocation **גם נביא גם כהן** appears in Jer 14.18 and 23.11, the two lexemes **נביא** and **כהן** are frequently used in combination with one another. The phrase 'their priests and prophets' (**כהניהם ונביאיהם**) is found in two lists (2.26; 32.32), as well as the plurals **נביאים** and **כהנים** in parallel (2.8; 4.9; 29.1).

²¹⁶ The name **ירמיהו** occurs more frequently without the attributive **הנביא**, as is the case in Jer 1.1, 11; 7.1; 11.1; 18.1, 18; 19.14; 20.1, 3 (x2); 21.1, 3; 25.1, 13; 26.7, 8, 9, 12, 20, 24; 29.30; 30.1; 32.1, 6, 26; 33.1, 19, 23; 34.1, 8, 12; 35.12, 18; 36.1, 4, 5, 10, 19, 27 (x2), 32 (x2); 37.4, 12, 14 (x2); 15, 16 (x2), 17, 18, 21 (x2); 38.1, 6 (x3), 7, 11, 12 (x2), 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 24, 27, 28; 39.11, 14, 15; 40.1, 2, 6; 42.5, 7; 43.1, 2, 8; 44.15, 20, 24; 45.1; 51.60, 61, 64 (cf. **ירמיהו** **הענתתי** in 29.27). Where Jeremiah's name is spelled defectively, it appears in the phrase **ירמיה הנביא** (28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15; 29.1) except in 27.1. In 28.1 Hananiah's full name, **חנניה בן עזור**, is given, and only in Jer 28.11 does his name appear without **הנביא**.

²¹⁷ Compare the introductions to the oracles concerning Moab (48.1–47), Ammon (49.1–6), Edom (49.7–22), Damascus (49.23–27), Kedar (49.28–33).

²¹⁸ I am not wedded to this view, but I suggest it because the use of **נביא** as a title is usually regarded as a (very) late expansion. I propose this reading to suggest it is at least possible to find another explanation. See, e.g., Gonçalves, *Les « Prophètes Écrivains »*, 176–77; Stipp, *Prophetentitel und Eigennamen*, in: *»Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben« (Gen 18,19)*, ed. Achenbach and Arndt, BZABR 13, Wiesbaden, 2009, 293–307.

One frequently used collocation concerns ‘all my servants the prophets’ (כל-עבדי), a phrase found predominantly in longer prose speeches and addresses (Jer 7.25; 25.4; 35.15; 44.4; cf. 26.5; 29.19).²¹⁹ The first person suffix of עבדי refers to YHWH in every case, and the contexts of the phrase are consistently negative. Despite being sent frequently (השכם ושלח), these prophets were not listened to or heeded. The phrase is used in the recurring motif of highlighting failures in religious devotion to YHWH.

Some collocations where the lexeme נביא is *nomens rectum* use terms related to the human body. These include the phrases ‘the bones of the prophets’ (עצמות נביאים) in Jer 8.1; ‘the hearing of the prophet Jeremiah’ (אזני ירמיהו הנביא) in 29.29; ‘the shoulders of Jeremiah the prophet’ (צואר ירמיה הנביא) in 28.10, 12; and ‘the will of the prophets’ (לב) (הנבאים) in 23.26. Several of these bodily terms have non-literal connotations in these collocations as well; the heart (לב) often indicates a person’s will or intentions, and the ear (אזן) often refers to a person’s presence or audience.

Two phrases, the ‘words of the prophets’ (דברי נביאים) in Jer 23.16; 27.14²²⁰ and the ‘word of the prophet’ (דבר הנביא) in 28.9, make an association between a נביא and speech.²²¹ Both of the plural phrases in 23.16 and 27.14 are predicates of the phrase ‘do not listen’ (אל תשמעו) and are associated with the negative words מהבלים and שקר respectively. The דבר הנביא in 28.9 is governed by the *qal* infinitive construct בא and is associated with the נביא who prophesies concerning well-being (לשלו). This phrase ‘when the word of the prophet comes’ (בבא דבר הנביא) is further associated with the prophet whom YHWH has sent in truth (הנביא אשר שלחו יהוה באמת) being recognised (*qal* ידע) as such.

Two short collocations with נביא appear related to issues regarding status, reliability or authority. The first, ‘where are your prophets’ (איה נביאיכם), is a question Jeremiah asks of the king Zedekiah in 37.19. These prophets, so the question implies, could have given the king guidance instead. The second, ‘they are prophets’ (נבאים הם), is used in a pair of conditional clauses in 27.18, where the two phrases, ‘if they are prophets and if they have the word of YHWH’ (ואם נבאים הם ואם יש דבר יהוה אתם) parallel one another.

In three collocations the lexeme נביא is used with words which are related to place names and location. Two references to the prophets of Jerusalem are found in Jer 23.14, 15,

²¹⁹ On this phrase, see Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 41–80.

²²⁰ Cf. 2 Chr 18.12.

²²¹ Cf. Deut 13.4.

and a similar reference to the prophets of Samaria appears in 23.13.²²² Each of these references is negative; these prophets are criticised primarily for religious failures, particularly apostasy. The groups are described negatively with the terms ‘tastelessness’ (תפלה) and ‘horror’ (שערורה). The third phrase, found in Jeremiah’s letter to the Judaeans in Babylon in 29.8, is a reference to ‘your prophets in your midst’ (נביאיכם אשר בקרבכם). In parallel with ‘your prophets’ (נביאיכם) in 29.8 are ‘your diviners’ (קסמיכם). The deportees are warned against being deceived (נשא) by these religious specialists; in parallel, they also are told not to listen (אל תשמעו), literally, to the dreams these individuals dream to them (חלמתיכם אשר אתם מחלמים).

A similarly negative context in Jer 23.26 includes the phrase ‘prophets of the deceit of their hearts’ (נביאי תרמת לבם) which is in parallel with ‘the prophets prophesying deceit’ (הנבאים נבאי השקר). Both of these collocations are unique. The following phrase in 23.17 accuses these prophets of apostasy; as the Judaeans’ ancestors forgot YHWH’s name due to Ba’al, the prophets plan to make the people forget YHWH’s name by their dreams (חלום).

1.2.2. נביא as subject of a finite verb

The lexeme נביא is associated with a wide range of activities, behaviours and states. It is the subject of 82 different finite verbs formed from 68 different roots.²²³ In the following table are listed all of these verbs according to *binyan*.²²⁴

Table 2. נביא as subject of a finite verb

Lexeme	Binyan		Gloss	References
אהב	qal	x1	‘love’	Jer 8.2
אמר	qal	x16	‘say’	Jer 1.7; 2.27; 5.12; 23.17, 25, 34; 26.11; 28.1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15; 38.15; 42.4; 51.61
אסף	niphal	x1	‘gather’	Jer 8.2

²²² For the only other references to Samaria in Jeremiah, see Jer 31.5; 41.5.

²²³ Infinitives constructs and infinitive absolutes, where נביא is involved in the verbal action, are listed separately from finite forms.

²²⁴ I have included *hiphil* verbs where נביא or נביאים is the ‘second subject’ participating in the verbal action. See IBHS §27.1d–f. Waltke and O’Connor note the view of Speiser, *Studies in Semitic Formatives*, JAOS 56 (1936), 22–46. For the distinctive aspect of *hiphil* in contrast with *piel*, see Jenni, *Der hebräische Piel*, Zürich, 1968.

בוא	qal	x1	'go'	Jer 37.16
בוש	qal	x2	'be ashamed'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12
בוש	hiphil	x3	'be ashamed'	Jer 2.26; 6.15 = 8.12
בטח	hiphil	x1	'trust'	Jer 28.15
בנה	qal	x1	'build'	Jer 32.35
דבר	piel	x8	'speak'	Jer 1.6, 7; 23.16, 28; 25.2; 28.16; 34.6; 45.1
דחה	niphal	x1	'push'	Jer 23.12
דרש	qal	x1	'ask'	Jer 8.2
היה	qal	x3	'be'	Jer 5.13; 8.2; 28.8
הלך	qal	x4	'go, walk'	Jer 1.8; 2.8; 8.2; 28.11
חזה	hishtaphel	x1	'worship'	Jer 8.2
חזק	piel	x1	'be strong'	Jer 23.14
חלם	qal	x2	'dream'	Jer 23.25 (x2)
חנף	qal	x1	'pollute'	Jer 23.11
ידע	qal	x4	'know'	Jer 1.6; 6.15 = 8.12; 14.18
ידע	niphal	x1	'know'	Jer 28.9
יעל	hiphil	x2	'profit'	Jer 23.32
יעץ	qal	x1	'counsel'	Jer 38.15
ישב	qal	x2	'dwell'	Jer 37.16; 38.13
כחד	piel	x1	'hide'	Jer 38.14
כחש	piel	x1	'deceive'	Jer 5.12
כשל	niphal	x2	'stumble'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12
כתב	qal	x1	'write'	Jer 51.60
לקח	qal	x1	'take'	Jer 28.10
מות	hiphil	x2	'die'	Jer 38.15, 16
מות	qal	x3	'die'	Jer 28.17; 38.9, 10
מנע	qal	x1	'withhold'	Jer 42.4
נאם	qal	x1	'speak'	Jer 23.31
נבא	niphal	x1	'prophecy'	Jer 28.6
נבא	hithpael	x1	'prophecy'	Jer 23.13
נגד	hiphil	x2	'declare'	Jer 38.15; 42.4
נוח	hiphil	x1	'rest'	Jer 43.6
נפל	qal	x3	'fall'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 23.12
נשא	hiphil	x1	'deceive'	Jer 29.8
סחר	qal	x1	'trade'	Jer 14.18
ספר	piel	x3	'relate'	Jer 23.27, 28, 32
סתר	hiphil	x1	'hide'	Jer 36.26
עבד	qal	x1	'serve'	Jer 8.2
עמד	qal	x1	'stand'	Jer 23.22
עשה	qal	x5	'do, make'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 28.13; 32.32; 38.12
פגע	qal	x1	'meet'	Jer 27.18
פלל	hithpael	x2	'pray'	Jer 37.3; 42.2
פנה	qal	x2	'turn'	Jer 2.27; 32.33

צוה	piel	x2	'command'	Jer 36.8; 51.59
קבר	niphal	x1	'bury'	Jer 8.2
קום	hiphil	x1	'raise up'	Jer 29.15
ראה	qal	x1	'see'	Jer 5.12
רוץ	qal	x1	'run'	Jer 23.21
רפא	piel	x2	'heal'	Jer 6.14 = 8.11
שאל	qal	x1	'ask'	Jer 23.33
שבר	qal	x2	'break'	Jer 28.10, 13
שוב	hiphil	x1	'turn'	Jer 23.22
שים	qal	x1	'put'	Jer 32.34
שלח	qal	x1	'send'	Jer 29.1
שלך	hiphil	x1	'cast'	Jer 38.9
שמע	hiphil	x1	'hear'	Jer 23.22
שמע	qal	x3	'hear'	Jer 28.7, 15; 42.4
שקה	hiphil	x1	'drink'	Jer 23.15
תמה	qal	x1	'be astounded'	Jer 4.9
תמם	qal	x1	'be complete'	Jer 14.15
תעה	hiphil	x2	'err'	Jer 23.13, 32

The semantic field whose verbs most frequently take נביא as a subject is communication (צוה *piel*, קבר *niphal*, קום *hiphil*, ראה *qal*, רוצ *qal*, רפא *piel*, שאל *qal*, שבר *qal*, שוב *hiphil*, שים *qal*, שלח *qal*, שלך *hiphil*, שמע *hiphil*, שמע *qal*, שקה *hiphil*, תמה *qal*, תמם *qal*, תעה *hiphil*). Of these, the most frequent finite verb used with נביא is אמר *qal*, with 16 instances where נביא is its subject.²²⁵ דבר *piel* is another verb frequently used with נביא; it parallels אמר *qal* in Jer 23.16–17, בטח *hiphil* in 28.15–16, and ספר *piel* in 23.28 (cf. 23.27). Some additional instances use related verbs to refer to the speech of a נביא. Zedekiah questions Jeremiah and instructs him not to hide (כחד *piel*) anything from him, but Jeremiah doubts that the king will listen to what he counsels (יעץ *qal*) and reports (נגד *hiphil*) in 38.14–15. Similarly, in 42.4, Jeremiah agrees to pray to YHWH on behalf of the people and promises to report (נגד *hiphil*) and not to withhold (מנע *qal*) what YHWH answers. Written communication is also related to נביא, as Jeremiah is the subject of כתב *qal* in the Seraiah colophon (51.60).

Dreaming (חלם *qal*) is another activity associated with נביא and the semantic field of communication. In Jer 23.25–32, the claim 'I have dreamed' (חלמתי) is made by נביאים

²²⁵ The infinitive construct לאמר is used to introduce direct discourse from a נביא in Jer 26.9; 32.3; 23.25; 27.16; 37.19; cf. 25.30. The combination of the infinitive absolute אָמַר with the participle אֹמְרִים in Jer 23.17 is unique to the book.

who are said to be prophesying falsely in YHWH's name (הַנְּבִיאִים הַנְּבִיאִים בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה שֶׁקֶר). Dreams are likened to other oracular messages in 23.28; the נביא who has a dream is to report it (ספר piel), and the נביא who has YHWH's word is to declare it (דבר piel).

Not all of a prophet's communicative acts are strictly verbal. The physical actions of Hananiah taking (לקח qal) yoke bars and breaking them (שבר qal) accompany his oracle in the temple (Jer 28.10). In turn, Jeremiah refers to this act as a metaphor for YHWH's judgment against Hananiah (28.13).

נביא is the subject of two verbs for deceit (כחש piel, נשא hiphil) that also are closely related to communication. In Jer 5.12 the prophets are accused of being unfaithful to YHWH (כחשו ביהוה) because they say (אמר qal) they will not see disaster or destruction.²²⁶

Two verbs which appear to be closely related to the semantic field of communication are נבא niph'al and נבא hithpael. The lexeme נביא is the subject of finite verbal forms of נבא in Jer 23.13 and 28.6. Here the critical question is the extent to which this signifies verbal speech.²²⁷ In the two instances of finite forms in Jeremiah, there is not much clear evidence. There appears to be a focus on the verbal element in 28.6, where Jeremiah responds to refers to the words which Hananiah prophesied (דבריו אשר נבאת), and repeats part of Hananiah's message. Hananiah speaks (אמר qal) to Jeremiah and those gathered in the temple in 28.1. The behaviour of the prophets of Samaria in 23.13 is less clear; it is difficult to determine from context if the נבא niph'al refers to more than verbal speech here. Movement is associated with the lexeme נביא in a similar fashion in 23.21, where נבא niph'al is in parallel with רויץ qal.

In a critical context, the lexeme נביא is the subject of רפא piel, a word for healing and restoration (Jer 6.14 = 8.11). The accusation that 'they heal the wound of my people'

²²⁶ There is some disagreement over text boundaries for Jer 5.12–14. In support of reading 5.12 independently of 5.11, where בית ישראל ובית יהודה could function as the subject of כחשו in 5.12, see McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1986, 121.

²²⁷ Here it is worth noting the debate concerning semantic development in verbal forms of נבא. Where it appears that the verb specifies a form of communicative speech in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 29.26), other instances seem to suggest observable behaviour (e.g. 1 Sam 10.6). See Jeremias, נביא, THAT II, 11–12; Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, VT.S 46, Leiden, 1992, 196. Cf. the view 'that נבא does not just mean speaking is shown by הַנְּבִיאִים' as found in Ezek 21.14, 33; 30.2; 34.2; 36.1, 3, 6; 37.4, 9, 12; 38.14; 39.1 (HALOT I, 659). However, the patterns of marking direct speech in Ezekiel are highly formulaic and structured, especially in Ezek 11.14–39.29. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 230–39. The examples cited in HALOT may be more illustrative of a literary tendency than a semantic difference between the two verbs. See also Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 195–97.

(וִירְפְּאוּ אֶת שִׁבְרֵ עַמִּי) is modified with a prepositional phrase meaning 'lightly' or 'offhandedly' (עַל נִקְלָה).

Lexemes which pertain to a command or instruction (*piel* צוה, *hiphil* קום, *qal* שלח) take נביא as a subject in a few contexts, particularly the character of Jeremiah. Baruch ben Neriah does what Jeremiah instructs him (כָּכָל אֲשֶׁר צִוְּהוּ) by reading from a scroll in the Jerusalem temple (Jer 36.8). The Seraiah colophon relates the instructions (הַדְּבָר אֲשֶׁר) that Jeremiah gives to Seraiah, the 'quartermaster' (שֶׁר מְנוּחָה), in 51.59. Jeremiah sends (*qal* שלח) a letter to the deportees in Babylon (29.1). The letter quotes in 29.15 the claim made by the people that YHWH has raised up prophets for them in Babylon (הַקִּים) (לִּנוּ יְהוָה נְבִיאִים בְּבָבֶלָה).

A number of lexemes related to inquiry or requests made toward a deity (*qal* דרש, *qal* פגע, *hithpael* פָּלַל, *qal* שאל, *hithpael* פָּלַל) take נביא as a subject. In context, *qal* פגע, *hithpael* פָּלַל and *qal* שאל are used to describe settings where a נביא mediates between YHWH and another party (Jer 23.33; 27.18; 37.3. 42.2). The sense of *qal* דרש in 8.1–3 parallels this inquiry with acts of religious worship.²²⁸

Words related to religious devotion or service are frequently paired with נביא. The lexemes *qal* אהב, *hiphil* בטח, *hishtaphel* חוה, *qal* עבד, *qal* פנה, *hiphil* שוב, *hiphil* שמע, *qal* חנף, *qal* שים, *hiphil* תעה, construction (*qal* בנה) are used to refer to the religious behaviour of a נביא. Words which indicate forms of help (*piel* רפא, *piel* חזק) describe religiously motivated activity of prophets in relation to other people. Prophets are said to 'do' (*qal* עשה) abominable things (תועבה) in 6.15 = 8.12, which is a criticism largely concerned with religious behaviour (cf. 28.13; 32.32; 38.12).

Knowledge is a semantic field associated with נביא where it is the subject of *qal* ידע and *niphal* ידע. Most of these instances refer to a lack of knowledge. The context in Jer 14.18 is critical of prophets who lack knowledge despite 'roaming' (*qal* סחר) the land, and in 6.15 = 8.12 prophets are accused of lacking a sense of shame, not aware of their humiliation (הכלים). In 1.6 the verb refers to a lack of ability or authorisation, as Jeremiah says he does not know how to speak (*qal* אמר). The *niphal* verb in 28.9 refers to a prophet being known or recognised as such.

²²⁸Thelle, *Ask God*, BET 30, Frankfurt am Main, 2002, 225.

Verbs for listening (שמע *qal*) take the lexeme נביא as a subject in contexts where speech is recognised or affirmed. Jeremiah tells Hananiah to listen (שמע נא) both as he responds to him in the Jerusalem temple and when he delivers an oracle against him (Jer 28.7, 15). When asked by military officers to grant their request for prayer, Jeremiah acknowledges that he has heard them (שמעתי) and that he will pray accordingly (כדבריכם) in Jer 42.4.

A range of semantic fields are associated with נביא in contexts of punishment or threat. Along with other professional classes, prophets are told their bones will not be gathered (אסף *niphal*) for burial (קבר *niphal*) in Jer 8.2. Death (מות *qal*, מות *hiphil*) is both a threat to Jeremiah (38.9, 10, 15, 16) and a consequence of YHWH's judgment in Hananiah's case (28.17). Falling (נפל *qal*, בשל *niphal*) and being pushed (דחה *niphal*) are parts of metaphors for punishment (6.15 = 8.12; 23.12), and the sense of being made complete (תמם *qal*)²²⁹ is associated with judgment. Imprisonment is implied in the context of descriptions of literal, physical force, as in being cast (שלך *hiphil*) into a pit (38.9), or hiding (סתור *hiphil*) in order to avoid arrest in 36.26.

Emotional or mental states are described in several contexts. נביא is the subject of verbs for shame (בוש *qal*, בוש *hiphil*), in Jer 2.26 where it is compared to a caught thief (כבשת גנב כי ימצא),²³⁰ and in 6.15 = 8.12 where it results from doing abominable things (תועבה עשו). Prophets are said to be in a state of shock, as described by the verb תמה *qal*, in 4.9.²³¹

A variety of physical actions and activities are associated with נביא. The lexeme is the subject of verbs for movement (בוא *qal*, הלך *qal*, סחר *qal*, רויץ *qal*), sometimes in a literal sense (Jer 28.11; 37.16) and also in metaphors for prophesying (23.21), or worship and religious fidelity (1.8; 2.8; 8.2; 14.18). Sensory verbs for sight (ראה *qal*) and hearing (שמע *qal*) take נביא as a subject, as well as drinking (שקה *hiphil*), or residing (ישב *qal*, נוח *hiphil*). The 'to be' verb (היה *qal*) is used with נביא to refer generally to their existence in the past (28.8), and negatively to their state in the future (5.13; 8.2).²³²

²²⁹ This is the only instance of the verb תמה in Jeremiah; cf. Gen 49.33; Deut 28.28; Isa 13.8; 29.9; Hab 1.5; Zech 12.4; Ps 48.6; Job 26.11; Eccl 5.7.

²³⁰ The phrase הנה מלכיהם שריהם וכהניהם in Jer 2.26a is expanded 2.26b, where הנה מלכיהם וכהניהם adds specificity to the subject of the verb.

²³¹ In Jer 4.9b תמה *qal* parallels שמם *niphal*, and is related to the phrase לב אבד in 4.9a.

²³² Both Jer 5.13 and 8.2 use the verb היה *qal* in similes which refer to future judgments against prophets. In 5.13 the prophets will become 'like breath'. In 8.2 they will become 'like dung'.

1.2.3. *נביא* as object of a finite verb

The lexeme *נביא* is the grammatical object of 40 verbs formed from 40 different roots.

Table 3. *נביא* as object of a finite verb

<i>Lexeme</i>	<i>Binyan</i>		<i>Gloss</i>	<i>References</i>
אבד	qal	x1	'perish'	Jer 27.15
אכל	qal	x1	'eat'	Jer 2.30
אמר	qal	x14	'say'	Jer 14.15; 23.15, 33, 37; 26.16; 28.1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15; 38.14; 42.2, 5
אסף	niphal	x1	'gather'	Jer 8.2
בוא	hiphil	x1	'go'	Jer 37.14
בוש	hiphil	x3	'be ashamed'	Jer 2.26; 6.15 = 8.12
דבר	piel	x4	'speak'	Jer 14.14; 23.21; 25.2; 46.13
היה	qal	x3	'be'	Jer 46.1; 47.1; 49.34
ידע	qal	x2	'know'	Jer 1.5
ילד	qal	x1	'give birth'	Jer 2.27
יצא	hiphil	x1	'go out'	Jer 20.3
יצר	qal	x1	'form'	Jer 1.5
ישע	hiphil	x1	'save'	Jer 2.27
כלא	qal	x1	'restrain'	Jer 32.3
לקח	qal	x2	'take'	Jer 38.14; 43.5
מות	hiphil	x2	'die'	Jer 38.15, 16
משך	qal	x1	'pull'	Jer 38.13
נגש	qal	x1	'approach'	Jer 42.1
נוח	hiphil	x1	'rest'	Jer 43.6
נטש	qal	x1	'cast off'	Jer 23.33
נכה	hiphil	x2	'strike'	Jer 20.2; 37.15
נפץ	piel	x1	'smash'	Jer 13.14
נתן	qal	x5	'put'	Jer 1.5; 37.4, 15; 38.7, 16 (!)
סתר	hiphil	x1	'hide'	Jer 36.26
עלה	hiphil	x2	'go up'	Jer 38.10, 13
ענה	qal	x1	'answer'	Jer 23.37
עשה	qal	x1	'do'	Jer 38.9
פקד	qal	x3	'punish'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 23.34
צוה	piel	x4	'command'	Jer 1.7; 14.14; 23.32; 32.35
קדש	hiphil	x1	'consecrate'	Jer 1.5
קום	hiphil	x1	'raise up'	Jer 29.15
קצף	qal	x1	'be angry'	Jer 37.15
ראה	qal	x2	'see'	Jer 23.13, 14

שבע	niphal	x1	'swear'	Jer 38.16
שטח	qal	x1	'spread out'	Jer 8.2
שלח	qal	x19	'send'	Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 23.21, 32; 25.4; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19; 35.15; 37.3, 7, 17; 38.14; 42.5; 44.4
שלך	hiphil	x1	'throw'	Jer 38.9
שמע	qal	x8	'hear'	Jer 23.25; 26.7; 27.9, 14, 16; 29.8; 37.14; 38.15
תפש	qal	x3	'seize'	Jer 26.8; 37.13, 14

One of the most frequent associations with נביא in this list are verbs related to instructions or commands (נתן *qal*, צוה *piel*, קדש *hiphil*, קום *hiphil*, שלח *qal*). These verbs are all used in contexts where the authority or validity of a נביא is discussed. The verb that most frequently takes נביא as object, with 19 occurrences, is שלח *qal*.²³³ YHWH is usually the subject (Jer 1.7; 7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4), though a נביא is also sent to YHWH by a human party to intercede on their behalf (37.7; 42.6, 9, 20).²³⁴ Six passages in Jeremiah describe YHWH sending עבדי הנביאים (7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4),²³⁵ and in each instance the lexeme שכם *hiphil* is used adverbially with שלח *qal*.²³⁶ These terms are also related to דבר *piel*, as in 14.14 where Jeremiah relays YHWH's claim that he has neither sent (לא שלחתים), nor commanded (לא צויתים), nor spoken to prophets (לא דברתי).

²³³ In Jer 23.33–40 YHWH rejects those who ask about the מִשְׁא יְהוָה since תאמרו לא תאמר לאליכם לאמר לא תאמרו (23.38). When Johanan ben Kareah and Jezaniah ben Hoshaiiah ask Jeremiah to pray on their behalf, they promise to do אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלַח יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ אֵלֵינוּ (42.5). After Jeremiah warns Azariah and Johanan against going to Egypt, the narrative describes the message as all the words אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַח (43.1). In these instances the reference to 'being sent' is related to the message relayed through a נביא. There are also references to Jeremiah 'sending' messages to his audiences, such as yoke bars to royal envoys (27.3) or letters and messages to Judaeans in Babylon (29.1, 3, 28, 31; cf. 29.25).

²³⁴ Twice Zedekiah sends priests to Jeremiah to ask him to pray to (פִּלֵּל) or inquire of (דָּרַשׁ) YHWH on their behalf (Jer 21.1–2; 37.3, 7). In another text the king sends for Jeremiah in order to ask (שָׁאַל) for counsel regarding military affairs (38.14). On the technical dimensions of these terms, see Thelle, *Ask God*. In another instance Johanan ben Kareah and 'all the people' send Jeremiah to YHWH to intercede on their behalf (42.6, 9, 20).

²³⁵ Five of these texts repeat the same phrase with only some variation: אֲשֶׁלַח אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת כָּל עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים (7.25). Only in 25.4 is the phrase used in third person, where Jeremiah declares יְהוָה שָׁלַח יְהוָה אֲלֵיכֶם אֶת כָּל עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים. All six texts emphasise the continuous nature of YHWH's 'sending' (i.e. הַשְׁכֵּם) in contrast with the obstinate unwillingness of the people to repent. Cf. 2 Kgs 17.13–14; cf. 17.23; 21.10; 24.2. See the discussion in Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 41–80.

²³⁶ The combination of שָׁלַח and שָׁכֵם is used in reference to עַבְדֵי הַנְּבִיאִים ('my servants the prophets') six times in the book with positive connotations (Jer 7.25; 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4). The phrase occurs 24 times in the Hebrew Bible (cf. 2 Kgs 9.7; 17.13; 21.10; 24.2; Amos 3.7; Zech 1.6; Dan 9.6, 10; Ezra 9.11).

אליהם.²³⁷ In five negative oracles YHWH claims that נביאים were not sent (14.14–15; 23.21, 32; 27.15; 29.9). Jeremiah rejects Hananiah's oracle in 28.15 by claiming לא שלחך יהוה, and he warns the Judean deportees in Babylon not to listen to נביאיכם and קסמיכם since they have not been sent (29.9).²³⁸

YHWH gives Jeremiah instructions in Jer 1.7 with the phrase על כל אשר אשלחך תלך, which parallels את כל אשר אצוך תדבר.²³⁹ In all but one instance, the lexeme צוה *piel* takes נביא as subject in parallel with שלח *qal*. In 32.35 צוה *piel* relates to instructions from YHWH regarding religious sacrifices. The lexemes נתן *qal*, קדש *hiphil*, ידע *qal* and יצר *qal* also are used in the semantic sense of commanding or instructing. The verbs parallel each other in 1.5, where YHWH commissions Jeremiah as a נביא לגוים. The lexeme קום *hiphil* also relates to this semantic field when the Judean deportees claim that YHWH has raised up prophets for them in Babylon (29.15).

Lexemes in the semantic field of communication (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, ענה *qal*) take נביא as object, as prophets are addressed in oracles (Jer 14.15; 23.15, 33, 37)²⁴⁰ and in narratives (26.16; 28.1, 5, 6, 11, 13, 15; 38.14; 42.2, 5). Speech in the form of an answer (ענה *qal*) is directed toward a נביא in 23.33. In a similar sense, נביא is the object of נגש *qal* in 42.1, as military officers 'approach' Jeremiah for consultation and for him to pray to YHWH on their behalf. In formulaic clichés that introduce prophetic speech, the verb for existence (היה *qal*) describes a word (דבר) coming or being present with a נביא in 46.1; 47.1; 49.34.

Some highly negative verbs take נביא as object in contexts related to judgment or punishment. Death (אבד *qal*, מות *hiphil*) is a threat made against prophets (Jer 27.15) and a feared consequence of prophetic speech (38.15, 16). Eating (אכל *qal*) is a metaphor for death in the phrase אכלה חרבכם נביאיכם ('your sword has consumed your prophets') in 2.30. General threats of punishment (פקד *qal*) by YHWH in 6.15 = 8.12; 23.34, and more specific warnings of destruction in the form of smashing (נפץ *piel*) in 13.14 and being

²³⁷ The phrase לא שלחתים ולא צויתים is found in Jer 14.14; 23.32. Being 'sent' (שלח *qal*) and being 'spoken to' (דבר *piel*) are parallel concepts in 23.21.

²³⁸ This is a claim also levelled against Jeremiah by Azariah ben Hoshaiah and Johanan ben Kareah in their flight to Egypt (Jer 43.2).

²³⁹ Only twice in these occurrences does שלח *qal* take the preposition על. In Jer 1.7, YHWH instructs Jeremiah to go על כל אשר אשלחך and in 26.15 Jeremiah claims to his audience in the temple that שלחני יהוה. In most other cases אל is used instead; see 7.25; 25.4; 29.19; 35.15; 42.5; 44.4. Some of Jeremiah's activity is couched in language related to 'being sent' to perform a task by YHWH (see 19.14; 25.15, 17; 26.15).

²⁴⁰ The prophetic cliché על הנבאים יהוה (צבאות) לכן כה אמר יהוה in Jer 14.15; 23.15 introduces oracles directed against prophets (cf. 23.9).

thrown (נטש *qal*) in 23.33 all take נביא as object. Even post-mortem threats are made against prophets, whose bones, instead of being gathered for burial, will be spread out (שטח *qal*) like dung on the ground in 8.2.

Lexemes related to the use of physical force or restraint are used in relation to נביא. A series of words in this general semantic field take נביא as object in reference to imprisonment. Prophets are the object of verbs for being restrained (כלא *qal*) in Jer 32.3, taken (לקח *qal*) in 38.14; 43.5, seized (תפש *qal*) in 26.8; 37.13, 14, and brought (בוא *hiphil*) before officials in 37.14. After being taken into custody, Jeremiah is resettled (נוח *hiphil*) in Egypt (43.6). Twice Jeremiah is struck (נכה *hiphil*) by priests as a form of official censure (20.2; 37.15). Jeremiah is both cast (שלך *hiphil*) into a pit (38.9) and put (נתן *qal*) into a pit (38.7); similarly he is put (נתן *qal*) into prison (37.4, 15). The king assures Jeremiah that he will not put him in the hand (אתנך ביד) of those who seek his life in 38.16. In order to escape punishment or censure, Jeremiah and Baruch are hidden (סתר *hiphil*) in 36.26; Jeremiah is released (יצא *hiphil*) from prison in 20.3, and rescued from the pit by being pulled out (משך *qal*) in 38.13 and brought up (עלה *hiphil*) in 38.10, 13.

Verbs in the semantic field of emotional states are used in relation to נביא. In Jer 2.26 and 6.15 = 8.12, prophets are threatened with shame (בוש *hiphil*). In 37.15, officials (שרים) become angry (קצר *qal*) with Jeremiah after he is accused of defecting to the foreign Babylonian army (38.11–14).

Verbs related to the senses take נביא as object, as prophets are both heard (שמע *qal*) in Jer 23.25; 26.7; 27.9, 14, 16; 29.8; 37.14; 38.15 and seen (ראה *qal*) in 23.13, 14. The semantic range of 'hearing' includes auditory perception (23.25; 26.7) or more specifically listening to or heeding a prophet (27.9, 14, 16; 29.8; 37.14; 38.15).

Some lexemes refer to religious concepts. Two religious statements in Jer 2.27 are a part of a religious critique of prophets. 'Confessional' statements are made to idols made of wood and stone; they are acknowledged as 'my father' (אבי) and as the one who gave birth to the prophets (ילד *qal*). In a time of need the prophets are accused of asking them to rise up (קום *qal*) and to help (ישע *hiphil*) them.

1.2.4. נביא with a non-finite verb

The lexeme נביא is associated with 26 participles formed from 23 verbal roots. Of these participles, 22 are in absolute state and 4 are in construct state. נביא is also associated

with 28 infinitives formed from 22 verbal roots. Of these infinitives, 10 are infinitive absolutes and 17 are infinitive constructs.

Table 4. נביא with a non-finite verb

<i>Lexeme</i>	<i>Binyan</i>	<i>Form</i>	<i>State</i>		<i>Gloss</i>	<i>References</i>
אכל	hiphil	participle	absolute	x1	'eat'	Jer 23.15
אמר	qal	participle	absolute	x6	'say'	Jer 2.27; 14.13, 15; 23.17; 27.9, 14
אמר	qal	infinitive	absolute	x1	'say'	Jer 23.17
אמר	qal	infinitive	construct	x20	'say'	Jer 5.14; 23.17, 25, 33; 25.2; 26.8, 11; 27.14, 16; 28.1, 11, 12, 13; 32.3; 35.15; 37.6, 19; 44.4; 45.1; 49.34
בוא	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'go'	Jer 37.4
בוש	qal	infinitive	absolute	x2	'be ashamed'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12
גנב	piel	participle	construct	x1	'steal'	Jer 23.30
דבר	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'speak'	Jer 28.7
דבר	piel	infinitive	construct	x1	'speak'	Jer 1.6
דרש	qal	infinitive	construct	x1	'ask'	Jer 37.7
הבל	hiphil	participle	absolute	x1	'be empty'	Jer 23.16
הלך	qal	infinitive	absolute	x2	'walk'	Jer 23.14; 28.13
חטא	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'sin'	Jer 32.35
חלם	hiphil	participle	construct	x1	'dream'	Jer 29.8
חשב	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'think'	Jer 23.27
טמא	piel	infinitive	construct	x1	'be unclean'	Jer 32.34
יעל	hiphil	infinitive	absolute	x1	'profit'	Jer 23.32
יצא	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'go out'	Jer 37.4
כלם	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x2	'be humiliated'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12
כעס	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'anger'	Jer 32.32
למד	piel	infinitive	absolute	x2	'teach'	Jer 32.33 (x2)
לקח	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'take'	Jer 23.31
לקח	qal	infinitive	construct	x2	'take'	Jer 32.33; 36.26
מות	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'die'	Jer 28.16
מות	hiphil	infinitive	absolute	x1	'die'	Jer 38.15
מלא	piel	participle	absolute	x1	'fill'	Jer 13.13
נאף	piel	participle	absolute	x1	'commit adultery'	Jer 23.10

נאף	qal	infinitive	absolute	x1	'commit adultery'	Jer 23.14
נבא	hithpael	participle	absolute	x1	'prophesy'	Jer 14.14
נבא	niphil	participle	absolute	x11	'prophesy'	Jer 14.14, 15; 23.16, 25; 27.10, 15 (x2), 16 (x2); 29.9; 32.3
נבא	niphil	participle	construct	x2	'prophesy'	Jer 23.26, 32
נדח	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'banish'	Jer 27.15
נדח	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'banish'	Jer 27.15
נפל	qal	participle	absolute	x4	'fall'	Jer 6.15 = 8.12; 37.13, 14
עבר	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'pass over'	Jer 32.35
עשה	qal	participle	absolute	x2	'do, make'	Jer 6.13 = 8.10
עשה	qal	infinitive	construct	x1	'do, make'	Jer 32.35
פלל	hithpael	participle	absolute	x1	'pray'	Jer 42.4
צרר	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'bind'	Jer 32.2
קלל	niphil	participle	absolute	x2	'be easy'	Jer 6.14 = 8.11
ראה	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'see'	Jer 42.2
שאל	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'ask'	Jer 38.14
שבר	qal	infinitive	construct	x1	'break'	Jer 28.12
שחת	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'destroy'	Jer 13.14
שכח	hiphil	infinitive	construct	x1	'forget'	Jer 23.27
שכם	hiphil	infinitive	absolute	x6	'rise early'	Jer 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 32.33; 35.15; 44.4
שלח	qal	participle	absolute	x3	'send'	Jer 37.7; 26.5; 42.6
שלח	piel	participle	construct	x1	'send'	Jer 28.16
שלח	qal	infinitive	absolute	x5	'send'	Jer 25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4
שמע	qal	participle	absolute	x1	'listen'	Jer 32.33

Lexemes which refer to a kind of command or instruction, whether sending (שלח *qal*, שלח *piel*) or teaching (למד *piel*), describe the lexeme נביא. YHWH is the agent in most instances of these non-finite forms (Jer 25.4; 26.5; 28.16; 29.19; 32.33; 35.15; 44.4). The most common theme associated with the infinitive absolute שלח *qal* is YHWH sending (שלח *qal*) his servants the prophets (25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4).²⁴¹ Each instance of this motif

²⁴¹ Note the single instance an absolute participle in the motif in Jer 26.5.

includes the phrase **וּשְׁלַחְכֶם**, where YHWH's 'sending' of the prophets is characterised by a sense of persistence with **שְׁלַחְכֶם** *hiphil*.²⁴² In the other instances where the agent of **שְׁלַח** *qal* is not YHWH, Zedekiah is described as 'sending' for Jeremiah in 37.7, and the people are described as 'sending' Jeremiah to YHWH to pray on their behalf in 42.6.

Prophets who are not sent or commanded are accused of doing the people no good (**לֹא יוֹעִיל**) in Jer 23.32. The combined finite and infinitive forms of **יַעַל** *hiphil* here describe the semantic field of value. Similarly with the lexeme **הִבֵּל** *hiphil*, prophets are accused of making their audience empty (**מִהִבֵּלִים**) in 23.16; the sense in 23.16 is similar to 23.32, since the claim is that their prophecies have no value.

A range of non-finite forms in the semantic field of communication (**דָּבַר** *qal*, **אָמַר** *qal*, **דָּבַר** *piel*, **נִבֵּא** *hithpaal*, **נִבֵּא** *niphal*) refer to actions performed by a **נָבִיא**. The most frequent forms are derived from **אָמַר** *qal*. Speech quotations are frequently introduced by the infinitive construct **לֵאמֹר** (Jer 5.14, *passim*) and participles from **אָמַר** *qal* (2.27; 14.13, 15; 23.17; 27.9, 14). One instance of a participle from **דָּבַר** *qal* in 28.7 introduces speech in a similar fashion. Speech is associated with knowledge or ability (**יָדַע** *qal*) in the phrase **לֹא יָדַעְתִּי דָּבַר** in 1.6. Participles from **נִבֵּא** *niphal* parallel these and similar words for speech (14.15; 23.16, 25; 27.16).²⁴³ Speech is likened to theft (**גָּנַב** *piel*) in 23.30, and prophets are accused of taking (**לָקַח** *qal*) their tongues and, literally, 'oracling an oracle' (**וַיִּנְאֲמוּ נְאֻם**) in 23.31.

Non-finite forms of lexemes related to consultation (**שָׁאַל** *hithpaal*, **פָּלַל** *qal*, **דָּרַשׁ** *qal*) are found in relation to **נָבִיא** and related finite verbs. Priests are sent to Jeremiah in order to inquire (**דָּרַשׁ** *qal*) of YHWH in Jer 37.7 and king Zedekiah asks (**שָׁאַל** *qal*) for a word in 38.14. Jeremiah agrees to pray (**פָּלַל** *hithpaal*) according to the request made by military officers in 42.4.

Dreaming (**חָלַם** *hiphil*) is associated with **נָבִיא** in Jer 29.8. Jeremiah warns the Judeans in Babylon against listening to the dreams of their prophets (**נְבִיאֵיכֶם**) and diviners (**קְסָמֵיכֶם**). The phrasing of Jeremiah's instruction not to listen to the dreams of the proph-

²⁴² See 'again and again, persistently' (DCH VIII, 354), 'eifrig, auszudrücken' (Gesenius¹⁷, 826–27), 'diligenter, studioso, indefesse' (Zorell, 842). See also the phrases **וַאֲדַבֵּר הַשְׁכֵּם וְדָבַר** (Jer 7.13; 25.3; 35.14), **הָעֵלְתִּי** (11.7), and **לִמַּד הַשְׁכֵּם וְלִמַּד** (32.33).

²⁴³ Participial forms of **נִבֵּא** *niphal* are directly associated with speech in Jer 23.25, 27.16 and 32.3, where they are followed with the infinitive construct **לֵאמֹר**. In these texts the quotation formula introduces the content of what the participle **נִבֵּא** *niphal* signifies.

ets (אל תשמעו אל חלמתיכם אשר אתם מחלמים) assumes that 'dreaming to someone' (אתם מחלמים) indicates a form of communication which can be heard and therefore heeded.

Planning (*qal* חשב) is associated with נביא in the critical context of Jer 23.26. Here prophets are accused of intending to cause YHWH's people to forget (*hiphil* שכח) his name by means of their dreams.

In Jer 6.14 = 8.11, the lexeme נביא is the subject of the verb רפא *piel*. They are described as healing the wound of YHWH's people (וירפאו את שבר עמי) 'lightly' or 'offhandedly' (על נקלה). The participle from קלל *niphal* is related to the semantic field of help along with the verb רפא *piel* which it modifies.

Death (*qal* מות, *hiphil* מות), destruction (*qal* שבר, *hiphil* שחת) and punishment (*hiphil* נדח) are concepts associated with נביא in a variety of negative contexts (Jer 13.14; 27.15; 28.12; 35.15). Verbal forms of these lexemes take both human and divine subjects. YHWH declares that he will smash (*qal* שבר) and destroy (*hiphil* שחת) prophets without pity or mercy in 13.14. In 28.16, שלח *piel* is used euphemistically for death as Jeremiah tells Hananiah that YHWH will send him off the face of the earth (משלחך מעל פני האדמה). Falling (*qal* נפל) is associated with YHWH's judgment against prophets in 6.15 = 8.12. Being filled (*piel* מלא) with drunkenness is a metaphor for YHWH's judgment directed against prophets in 13.13.

In the negative context of Jer 23.12, eating (*hiphil* אכל) is a participle which takes נביא as its object. YHWH will make prophets eat wormwood (מאכיל) and they will drink bitter waters (השקתים מי ראש); while these acts could be metaphors for punishment, it is more likely that they refer to a ritual ordeal which tests its participants for their trustworthiness. Perhaps similarly, YHWH declares that he will fill (ממלא) with drunkenness a range of civic and religious leaders in 13.13.

The lexeme נביא is associated with emotional states (*qal* בוש, *hiphil* כלם, כעס *hiphil*), both as the recipient (Jer 6.15 = 8.12) and as the agent (32.32). It is also related to words which signify movement (*qal* בוא, *qal* הלך, *qal* יצא, *hiphil* עבר) and physical activity (*qal* עשה). Jeremiah's vision (*qal* ראה) is referred to in 42.2, where military leaders acknowledge that he can see their desperate state. Falling (*qal* נפל) is used to refer to a נביא defecting an enemy army in 37.13, 14. Also, Jehoiakim seeks to apprehend (*qal* לקח) Jeremiah and Baruch in 36.26, and Jeremiah is bound (*qal* צרר) in prison in 32.2.

The semantic field of purity and cleanliness refers to the lexeme נביא with the strongly religious terms חטא *hiphil* and טמא *piel*. Figures who are a part of the Judaeen leadership are accused in Jer 32.32–35 of religious and cultic failures, which YHWH associates with ‘defiling’ (חטא *hiphil*) his temple and causing the people to sin (טמא *piel*). Rather than listen (שמע *qal*) or take instruction (לקח *qal*) from YHWH, these leaders turned their backs. Sexual infidelity is used as metaphor for religious devotion when prophets are accused of adultery (נאף *qal*) in 23.10, 14. The participle in the phrase ‘adulterers fill the land’ (מנאפים מלאה הארץ) in 23.10 most likely refers to prophets, and the infinitive absolute נאוף in 23.14 is a part of the Jerusalem prophets’ behaviour that YHWH finds objectionable (שערורה).

1.2.5. Summary

Summarising the syntagmatic analysis of נביא, the most frequent collocations with נביא involve proper names; this accounts for nearly half of all occurrences of נביא in Jeremiah. Combinations of the lexemes נביא and כהן are quite frequent; another oft-used phrase is כל-עבדי הנביאים. The semantic field whose verbs most frequently takes נביא as a subject is communication (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, יען *qal*, מנע *qal*, נאם *qal*, נגד *hiphil*, ספר *piel*, ענה *qal*), command or instruction (צוה *piel*, קום *hiphil* and שלח *qal*), worship and religious service (אהב *qal*, בטח *hiphil*, חוה *hishtaphel*, עבד *qal*, פנה *qal*, שוב *hiphil*, שמע *hiphil*). Another semantic field which seems significant is purity or integrity (חנף *qal*, שים *qal*, תעה *hiphil*). These verbs are all syntagmatically related to נביא.

1.3. Paradigmatic data

The semantic field of the lexeme נביא will consist of words which describe the same conceptual field and share with it a syntagmatic or paradigmatic relation.²⁴⁴ So, in order to describe its semantic field, it is necessary to examine words with a paradigmatic relation to נביא.²⁴⁵ This will include words and collocations which are the subject or object of the

²⁴⁴ The following lexemes are listed as synonyms of נביא in DCH V, 591: חזה (‘seer’), ראה (‘seer’), קסם (‘diviner’), ענן (‘soothsayer’), כשף (‘sorcerer’), מלאך (‘messenger’), כהן (‘priest’), חכם (‘wise one’), שפט (‘judge’), זקן (‘elder’), נזיר (‘Nazirite’), משיח (‘anointed one’), מלך (‘king’), שר (‘prince’), ראש (‘head’), חסיד (‘loyal one’), עם (‘people’), ישב (‘inhabitant’), איש (‘man’), אב (‘father’), חלום (‘dream’), חזון (‘vision’), אורים (‘Urim’). Only זקן (‘elder’) is listed as an antonym.

²⁴⁵ Words such as prepositions, proper names and particles have been excluded from this list. It is more

same verb as נביא, are used in parallel with נביא,²⁴⁶ or are syntactically related to נביא. Such words are found in Table 5, which is discussed in detail below.

Table 5. Lexemes paradigmatically related to נביא

Lexeme/Collocation		Gloss	References
איש יהודה	x1	'men of Judah'	Jer 32.32
בית ישראל	x1	'house of Israel'	Jer 2.26
בנות המלך	x1	'daughters of the king'	Jer 43.6
בני יהודה	x1	'sons of Judah'	Jer 32.32
בני ישראל	x1	'sons of Israel'	Jer 32.32
בעל פקדת	x1	'guard officer'	Jer 37.13
גבר	x1	'man'	Jer 43.6
גנב	x1	'thief'	Jer 2.26
השרים וכל העם	x1	'the officers and all the people'	Jer 26.16
זקני הארץ	x1	'elders of the land'	Jer 26.17
זקני הכנים	x1	'elders of the priests'	Jer 19.1
זקני העם	x1	'elders of the people'	Jer 19.1
חכם	x1	'sage'	Jer 18.18 (cf. 50.35; 51.57)
טף	x1	'children'	Jer 43.6
יושבי ירושלם	x4	'inhabitants of Jerusalem'	Jer 8.1; 13.13; 25.2; 32.32
ישבי הארץ	x1	'inhabitants of the land'	Jer 13.13
יתר זקני הגולה	x1	'prominent elders of the exiles'	Jer 29.1
כהן	x23	'priest'	Jer 2.8; 4.9; 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 8.1; 13.13; 14.18; 18.18; 20.1; 23.11, 33, 34; 26.7, 8, 11, 16; 27.16; 28.1, 5; 29.1, 29; 32.32
כשף	x1	'magician'	Jer 27.9
מלך	x5	'king'	Jer 4.9; 8.1; 32.32; 37.3; 38.14
מלכי יהודה	x1	'kings of Judah'	Jer 8.1
נער	x1	'youth'	Jer 1.6
נפש	x1	'living thing'	Jer 43.6

helpful to comment on particular collocations and syntactic constructions. This analysis follows Table 1.

²⁴⁶ I understand 'parallelism' in terms of Kugel's description, summarised as 'A is so, and *what's more*, B'. The basic phenomenon is 'the recurrent use of a relatively short sentence-form that consists of two brief clauses,' where the second clause, B, 'has an emphatic, "seconding" character'. Kugel, *Idea of Biblical Poetry*, New Haven, CT, 1991, 1, 23, 51. For a positive reference to Kugel, and a detailed account of parallelism in poetic use, see Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, JSOTS 170, Sheffield, 1994, 114-59, esp. 114-22.

נשים	x1	'woman'	Jer 43.6
ספר	x2	'scribe'	Jer 36.26; 37.15
עבד	x1	'servant'	Jer 37.2 (cf. 36.24, 31; 37.18)
עם	x8	'people'	Jer 27.16; 28.1, 5, 11, 15; 29.1; 42.1, 8
עם הארץ	x2	'people of the land'	Jer 37.2
עם יהודה	x1	'people of Judah'	Jer 25.2
ענן	x1	'sorcerer'	Jer 27.9
קסם	x2	'diviner'	Jer 27.9; 29.8
רעה	x1	'shepherd'	Jer 2.8
שארית יהודה	x1	'remnant of Judah'	Jer 43.5
שר	x10	'official'	Jer 2.26; 4.9; 8.1; 26.11; 32.32; 37.14, 15; 38.4, 25, 27 (?)
שר מנוחה	x1	'quartermaster'	Jer 51.59
שרי החילים	x3	'army officials'	Jer 42.1, 8; 43.5
שרי יהודה	x2	'officers of Judah'	Jer 52.10
תפשי התורה	x1	'guardians of the teaching'	Jer 2.8

One place to start with analysing the semantic field of נביא are lists where the lexeme is found along with other similar words. Such lists are found in three texts which refer to נביא as a subset of a larger group (Jer 2.26–28; 8.1–3; 32.32–35). In these texts, נביא is paradigmatically related to the collocations 'the house of Israel' (בית ישראל), 'the sons of Israel' (בני ישראל) and 'the sons of Judah' (בני יהודה), which refer to larger national or ethnic categories. Each of these texts is explicitly critical of (alleged) cultic and religious practices: requesting help and assistance from idols (2.26), astral worship (8.2), illicit sacrifices to other gods and defilement of sacred space (32.34–35). The בני ישראל, בית ישראל and בני יהודה are held responsible for these practices, which are then more specifically associated with particular public and religious functionaries.

In Jer 2.26 YHWH criticises the idolatrous practices of the 'house of Israel' (בית ישראל), likening it to a thief (גנב) who has been caught in the act of stealing. An independent pronoun המה then specifies a subset of the house of Israel subject to YHWH's criticism with a list of lexemes, each with possessive suffixes: 'their kings, their officers, their priests and their prophets' (מלכיהם שריהם וכהניהם ונביאיהם). A similar pattern is found in Jer 32.32, where YHWH expresses his frustration with the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah, who have acted wickedly so as to anger him (עשו להכעסני). Similar to 2.26,

the pronoun הַמָּה in 32.32 lists lexemes belonging to these two groups, each with possessive suffixes and sub-grouped into smaller categories: first kings and officers (מְלָכֵיהֶם), then priests and prophets (כֹּהֲנֵיהֶם וְנָבִיאֵיהֶם), and finally the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (וְאִישׁ יְהוּדָה וְיֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם). A similar list of nouns appears in Jer 8.1. The text specifies groups of individuals whose bones YHWH says will be disinterred and desecrated: יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם, נָבִיאִים, כֹּהֲנִים, שְׂרָיו, מְלָכֵי יְהוּדָה. The only item in the list with a suffix is שְׂרָיו, which seems to refer to the kings of Judah in the collocation מְלָכֵי יְהוּדָה. The two collocations מְלָכֵי יְהוּדָה and יוֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם bookend the list. Where the lexemes מֶלֶךְ and שָׂר appear to share a syntactic relation to יְהוּדָה, and יוֹשֵׁבִי is collocated with יְרוּשָׁלַם, the כֹּהֲנִים and נָבִיאִים remain without any further specification.

These paradigmatic relationships, between מֶלֶךְ and שָׂר and between כֹּהֵן and נָבִיא, are generally found in this arrangement throughout Jeremiah.²⁴⁷ The semantic pattern is like a simile: as מֶלֶךְ relates to שָׂר, so כֹּהֵן relates to נָבִיא.²⁴⁸ To trace this semantic pattern, it will be helpful to examine the occurrences of these terms together.

A similar list of collocations and lexemes is found in Jer 13.13. YHWH declares his intent to fill these individuals with drunkenness (מִמְלֵא שִׁכְרוֹן), smash them, and destroy them. The collocations כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם and כָּל יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת bookend the parties listed out for judgment. The specific parties singled out among the inhabitants of the land and Jerusalem are 'the kings who sit on the throne of David' (הַמְּלָכִים הַיֹּשְׁבִים לְדָוִד עַל כִּסְאוֹ; cf. 22.4), as well as the priests and the prophets. Again, the lexemes כֹּהֵן and נָבִיא are referred to generally, while other parties are referred to more specifically (cf. 2.26; 8.1; 32.32).

Parallelisms that include the lexemes נָבִיא, כֹּהֵן, מֶלֶךְ and שָׂר are found in other texts. All four terms are found in a negative passage which describes YHWH's judgment (Jer 4.9). מֶלֶךְ and שָׂר are governed by the same verb and are described as suffering a loss of will (יֵאָבֵד לָב). Two phrases then describe states of shock experienced by כֹּהֲנִים and

²⁴⁷ The lexemes מֶלֶךְ and שָׂר are also collocated together in contexts where נָבִיא is absent. See Jer 1.18; 17.25; 24.1, 8; 25.18, 19; 26.21; 29.2; 34.21; 36.21; 38.22; 39.3, 13; 44.17, 21; 49.38.

²⁴⁸ Two texts that go against this trend are Jer 48.7 and 49.3. These texts make very similar claims against the deities Chemosh and Milcom (Q כְּמוֹשׁ is preferable to K כְּמִישׁ in Jer 48.7. In 49.1, 3 the word מְלָכָם ['their king'] should be repointed מְלָכָם). Together with כֹּהֲנֵי וְשָׂרָיו, they will go into exile. In Jer 48.7, Chemosh will go (יֵצֵא *qal*) into exile, and in 49.3, Milcom will go (יֵצֵא *qal*) into exile. These are unique instances where כֹּהֵן and שָׂר are isolated together in parallel with possessive suffixes. The statements are nearly identical, but differ slightly in their phrasing. Here שָׂר seems to refer to a religious official (contra HALOT II, 1351). The lexeme שָׂר has a wide range of semantic uses; see DCH VIII, 182–90.

נביאים. The priests will be appalled (שמם *niphal*) and the prophets will be astounded (תמה *qal*).

In Jer 26.1–23, a text which narrates Jeremiah's trial, the three classes of 'the priests, the prophets and all the people' (הכנים והנבאים וכל העם) engage in a kind of legal proceedings with the 'officers of Judah' (שרי יהודה) after hearing Jeremiah's speech in the temple (26.10–11).²⁴⁹ In the ensuing dialogue, the parties split into two 'sides', one being the הכהנים והנבאים (26.11, 16) and the other השרים וכל העם (26.12, 16). Eventually, a group of men from the elders of the land (אנשים מזקני הארץ) address both parties (כל קהל העם) and advocate on Jeremiah's behalf (26.17–23).²⁵⁰ They also cite the case of another individual who was executed by the king on account of his prophesying; this was after his message was heard by the king, all his warriors (כל גבוריו), and all his officers (כל השרים). Similarly, Jeremiah speaks to all the priests and the people (אל הכהנים ואל כל העם) as a group in order to warn them against listening to (שמע *qal*) prophets who are prophesying to them (27.16). Both Hananiah and Jeremiah address one another in the presence of the priests and the people (לעיני הכהנים ולעיני כל העם), who are described as 'standing' (עמד *qal*) in what appears to be an official capacity in the Jerusalem temple (28.1, 5).

In a number of other texts נביא and כהן are used together in a word pair or in a parallelism. As a word pair where both lexemes are grammatically singular, they are accused of greed (Jer 6.13 = 8.10), lacking knowledge (14.18), and godlessness (23.11). They are also described as asking (שאל *qal*) for an oracle from YHWH in 23.33, an act which is viewed negatively in context.

Singular forms are also found in parallel with other lexemes and collocations. An unspecified group expresses confidence in a series of religious functions in Jer 18.18: 'instruction from the priest' (תורה מכהן), 'counsel from the wise' (עצה מחכם), and 'word from the prophet' (דבר מנביא). The semantic overlap of the lexemes תורה, עצה and דבר suggests these figures are involved in similar activity. In 23.33–40, should a prophet, priest or people (עם) request particular oracles, YHWH declares he will punish them and their house (23.34).

²⁴⁹ On the formal and legal aspects of the narrative, see Westbrook, The Trial of Jeremiah, in: *Reading the Law*, ed. McConville, Möller, and Mein, LHBOTS 461, London, 2007, 95–107.

²⁵⁰ Cf. the phrase אנשים מזקני הארץ in Jer 26.17 with the זקני הכנים and זקני העם in 19.1.

As plurals, they are depicted as acting in concert in Jer 5.31; as the prophets prophesy falsely (נבאו בשקר), the priests ‘scrape out their hands’ (ירדו על ידיהם)—just how the people like it (אהבו כן). In Jer 2.8 four groups are criticised together: the priests fail to ask ‘where is YHWH?’ (איה יהוה); ‘the guardians of the law’ (תפשי התורה) are accused of not knowing (qal ידע) YHWH; shepherds (הרעים) are accused of rebelling (qal פשע) against YHWH; and prophets are accused of prophesying by Ba’al. These failures are collectively summarised in the concluding phrase, ‘they went after “no good”’ (אחרי לא יועלו הלכו). In Jer 29.1 priests and prophets are addressed together, along with certain elders among the exiles (יתר זקני הגולה) and all the people (כל העם) exiled from Jerusalem to Babylon.²⁵¹

A series of lexemes parallel נביא in Jer 27.9, all of which describe classes of individuals who are giving advice to kings. Jeremiah warns these kings not to listen (qal שמע) to their religious specialists, namely, prophets (נביאים), diviners (קסמים), dreams (חלמות), augurs (עננים) and magicians (כשפים).²⁵² The lexemes נביא, קסם and חלום are also found together in 29.8, where they are conceptually related to communicating divine messages. Here YHWH warns the Judaeans against being deceived (hiphil נשא) by them listening to (qal שמע) their dreams.

In the account of his commission as a prophet to the nations (נביא לגוים) in Jer 1.4–10, Jeremiah protests to YHWH that he does not know how to speak because he is a נער (1.6). The inherent assumption in Jeremiah’s statement is that his status as a נער excludes him from being able to speak as a נביא. Thus the relationship between the lexemes נביא and נער is construed negatively.

Various additional interactions between a נביא and other individuals and groups are attested in Jeremiah. A gatekeeper (בעל פקדת) exercises sufficient authority to arrest Jeremiah and bring him before officers (שרים) in Jer 37.13–14. Jeremiah is consulted by king Zedekiah in 37.3 and 38.14.²⁵³ Jeremiah hides along with the scribe (ספר) Baruch in 36.26.²⁵⁴ In the narrative account of the Judaeans’ flight to Egypt (43.4–7), Johanan ben Kareah and the military officers (שרי החילים) take the entire remnant of Judah (כל שארית)

²⁵¹ Following the list of addressees in Jer 29.1, other individuals are referred to as having left Jerusalem: king Jeconiah, the גבירה (‘queen mother’); the סרים (‘eunuch’); שרי יהודה וירושלם (cf. 52.10); as well as the difficult terms הרש (‘craftsman’) and מסגר (‘smith’).

²⁵² For exegetical comments on this text, see chapter 5, section 2.3, page 170.

²⁵³ Neither the king, his servants (עבדיו) nor the עם הארץ listen to (qal שמע) the words of a prophet in Jer 37.2.

²⁵⁴ Jeremiah is imprisoned in the house of Jonathan, who is called הספר, in Jer 37.15.

with them to Tahpanhes in Egypt. General descriptions of the *שארית יהודה* (יהודה) include men, women and children, and people who had returned to Judah to sojourn there. More specifically, a group of 'daughters of the king' (*בנות המלך*), Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch ben Neriah went with the Judaeen remnant to Egypt (43.6). In superscriptions and colophons the lexeme *נביא* is associated with 'all the people of Judah' (*כל עם יהודה*) and 'all the inhabitants of Jerusalem' (*כל יושבי ירושלם*) in 25.2 and the 'quartermaster' (*שר* (*מנוחה*)) in 51.59.²⁵⁵

1.4. Summary of *נביא*

I have already summarised the syntagmatic analysis of *נביא* in detail (§1.2.5, p. 60.), so here I will only briefly mention the primary results. In addition to proper names, *נביא* is most frequently found together with *כהן* and in the collocation *כל-עבדי הנביאים*. The semantic fields associated with *נביא* are communication, command or instruction, worship and religious service, and purity or integrity. This is a rough outline of the syntagmatic relations of *נביא*.

There are a diverse set of paradigmatic relations for *נביא*. The most significant of these is *כהן*, a lexeme which also has a significant syntagmatic relation to *נביא*. Among the paradigmatic relationships, there is a frequent parallelism between *מלך* and *שר* and between *כהן* and *נביא* which suggests that these terms are interrelated. I would argue that they follow a semantic pattern: as *מלך* relates to *שר*, so *כהן* relates to *נביא*. This highlights one of the most important conclusions from the foregoing analysis of the semantic field of *נביא*. That is, the closest word to *נביא*, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is *כהן*, and the two are used together as a 'word pair'.

2. Verbal forms from *נבא* ('prophecy')

Verbal forms from *נבא* appear 40 times in Jeremiah in 36 verses.²⁵⁶ Of these occurrences, 17 are finite verbs, 21 are participles, and two are infinitive constructs.²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ See HALOT II, 1352.

²⁵⁶ Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 14.14 (x2), 15, 16; 19.14; 20.1, 6; 23.13, 16, 21, 25, 26, 32; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 12, 18, 20; 27.10, 14 (x2), 15 (x2), 16 (x2); 28.6, 8, 9; 29.9, 21, 26, 27, 31; 32.3; 37.19.

²⁵⁷ Finite forms are found in Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 20.1, 6; 23.13, 21; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 20; 28.6, 8, 9; 29.31; 37.19. Participles are found in 14.14 (x2), 15, 16; 23.16, 25, 26, 32; 26.18, 20; 27.10, 14, 15 (x2), 16 (x2); 29.9, 21, 26, 27; 32.3. Infinitive constructs are found in 19.14; 26.12.

2.1. Morphology

The verb בּוֹא ('prophesy') is a ל"א verb from נבא.²⁵⁸ It is widely considered to be a denominative from נְבִיא.²⁵⁹ In Jeremiah, verbal forms of נבא occur in *niphal* and *hithpael* binyanim.²⁶⁰ Forms of נבא *hithpael* occur in Jer 14.14; 23.13; 26.20; 29.26, 27.²⁶¹

2.2. Syntagmatic data

The syntagmatic data listed here is primarily restricted to syntax on the levels of phrase, clause and sentence. I have listed collocations with verbal forms of נבא (Table 6), subjects of נבא (Table 7), and prepositional phrases with נבא (Table 9). Lexemes and collocations, with basic information, are listed alphabetically in each table, and followed by my comments.

First, there are some repeating patterns in the use of verbal forms which can be analysed as collocations, and they are listed in Table 6 below. In some instances I have included singular and plural forms of the verb נבא. These decisions are discussed in more detail in my comments.

²⁵⁸ There is disagreement regarding the form in the phrase הַנְּבִיאִי בְּבַעַל in Jer 23.12. Unlike other forms, here the masoretic vocalisation indicates doubling of the initial נ. Some hold that the -t- infix typical of the *hithpael* stem has been assimilated in the first radical, thus supposing the form **hithnabbeu* (Bauer-Leander §15g; GKC §54c). It is possible the ה of הַנְּבִיאִי in Jer 23.12 results from dittography; see 'der ganz parallelen Stelle' נְבִיאִי in 2.8 (GKB, §19d, cf. II, 99 §15g). For other proposals, see Eitan, Light on the History of the Hebrew Verb, *JQR* 12 (1921), 25–32; Yellin, Hippa'el-Nif'al Conjugation in Hebrew and Aramaic, *JPOS* 4 (1924), 85–106.

²⁵⁹ See, e.g., HALOT I, 659. Cf. Huehnergard classifies נְבִיא as an actant noun in the *qātil* pattern. Such forms 'may be described as reflecting the result of the action of the associated (verbal) root.' The semantics of these forms are subdivided as follows: 'forms derived from stative roots are descriptive in meaning, those from active intransitive roots are resultative, and those from transitive roots are passive'. Because Huehnergard derives נְבִיא from the common Semitic root *nb* ('to call'), which is transitive, the *qātil* form נְבִיא is passive. Huehnergard, *Qātil and Qatil Nouns*, *10, *19. See also Huehnergard, Etymology and Meaning of Hebrew *nābī*.

²⁶⁰ The morphological forms of נבא *niphal* found in Jeremiah are: לְהִנְבִּיאַתְּ (Jer 19.14; 26.12); נְבִיאָהּ (20.6; 28.6); נְבִיאָהּ (26.9); נְבִיאָהּ (20.1; 25.13; 26.11; 29.31); נְבִיאָהּ (2.8; 5.31; 37.19); נְבִיאָהּ (23.21); נְבִיאָהּ [participle] (26.18; 32.3); נְבִיאָהּ (14.14, 15, 16; 27.10, 14, 15, 16; 29.9); הַנְּבִיאִים (14.15; 23.16, 25; 27.15, 16; 29.21); נְבִיאָהּ (23.26, 32); הַנְּבִיאָהּ (11.21; 25.30); נְבִיאָהּ (28.9); וַיִּנְבֵּא (26.20); וַיִּנְבֵּא (28.8). See Even-Shoshan II, 1361–62.

²⁶¹ The morphological forms of נבא *hithpael* found in Jeremiah are: הִתְנַבֵּא (Jer 23.13); מִתְנַבֵּא (26.20); וּמִתְנַבֵּא (29.26); הִתְנַבֵּא (29.27); מִתְנַבֵּא (14.14). See Even-Shoshan II, 1361–62.

2.2.1. Collocations with נבא

Verbal forms from נבא are found in a number of collocations listed in Table 6 below.

Table 6. Collocations with נבא

Collocation	Binyan	Form	References
דבר אשר נבאת	niphal	finite	x1 Jer 28.6
הנבאים הנבאים בשמי	niphal	participle	x4 Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 29.21
הנבאים הנבאים לכם	niphal	participle	x3 Jer 23.16; 27.15, 16
הנבאים נבאי השקר	niphal	participle	x1 Jer 23.26
הנביא אשר ינבא	niphal	finite	x2 Jer 28.8; 37.19
הנביאים נבאו	niphal	finite	x1 Jer 2.8; 5.31
יהוה שלחני להנבא	niphal	inf cstr	x1 Jer 26.12
לא תנבא	niphal	finite	x1 Jer 11.21
משגע ומתנבא	hithpael	participle	x1 Jer 29.26
מתנבאים לכם	hithpael	participle	x2 Jer 14.14; 29.27
נבאי חלמות	niphal	participle	x1 Jer 23.32
נבא בשם יהוה	niphal	finite	x1 Jer 26.9
נבא בשקר	niphal	finite	x2 Jer 5.31; 20.6
נבא לכם	niphal	finite	x2 Jer 29.31; 37.19
נבאי חלמות	niphal	participle	x1 Jer 23.32
שקר הם נבאים לכם	niphal	participle	x3 Jer 27.10, 14, 16

The most frequent association with verbs from נבא is with the lexeme נביא. These words are most often paired in participial phrases, such as הנבאים הנבאים בשמי (Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 29.21) and הנבאים הנבאים לכם (23.16; 27.15, 16). The phrase שקר הם נבאים לכם is repeated three times in 27.10, 14, 16 and the pronoun הם refers an instance of נביא in each case. Contextually, these phrases share a large amount of semantic overlap; they describe very similar phenomena in a small cluster of texts in 14.11–15, 23.16–32, 27.10–16 and 29.21–28. Finite forms of the verb appear in two אשר clauses, also describing the lexeme נביא (28.8; 37.19).

Twice the *hithpael* participle is used in the phrase מתנבאים לכם to summarise a message or set of behaviour as prophesying (Jer 14.14; 29.27). In both cases the phrases refer to the lexeme נביא and in 14.14 the *hithpael* participle is parallel to the *niphal*.

The lexeme שקר is used in several collocations with verb forms of נבא. It is used adverbially in the phrase נבא בשקר in Jer 5.31 and 20.6; the phrase הנבאים נבאי השקר in 23.26 is grammatically difficult, but also associates שקר with the verb נבא.

2.2.2. Subjects of נבא

For 17 finite verbal forms of נבא in Jeremiah,²⁶² there are eight different subjects. Of these subjects, five are proper names; the other three are nominal forms of נביא. Except for the *hithpael* in Jer 23.13, all of the finite verbs from נבא in Jeremiah are *niphal* forms. The sense of the denominative *niphal* verb, and the closely associated *hithpael*, is to act or behave like a נביא.²⁶³

Table 7. Subjects of נבא

Lexeme or collocation		Gloss	References
אוריהו בן שמעיהו	x1	'Uriah ben Shemaiah'	Jer 26.20
הנביא	x1	'prophet'	Jer 28.9
הנביאים	x5	'prophets'	Jer 2.8; 5.31; 23.21; 28.8; 37.19
חנניה	x1	'Hananiah'	Jer 28.6
ירמיהו	x4	'Jeremiah'	Jer 20.1; 25.13; 26.9, 11
ירמיהו (?)	x2	'Jeremiah' (?)	Jer 11.21; 25.30
נביאי שמרון	x1	'prophets of Samaria'	Jer 23.13
פשחור	x1	'Pashhur'	Jer 20.6
שמעיה הנחלמי	x1	'Shemaiah the Nehelamite'	Jer 29.31

Unsurprisingly, Jeremiah is the subject of the finite verb נבא on multiple occasions (Jer 20.1; 25.13; 26.9, 11). The reference in 25.13 is a description of כל הכתוב בספר הזה ('all that is written in this scroll') which Jeremiah prophesied against the nations (cf. 1.5; 28.8).²⁶⁴ The other three occurrences are all found in narratives where an audience hears Jeremiah prophesy and reacts negatively toward him (20.1; 26.9, 11). The subjects of the

²⁶² Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 20.1, 6; 23.13, 21; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 11, 20; 28.6, 8, 9; 29.31; 37.19.

²⁶³ Denominative *niphal* verbs are rare, and likely 'related to [the *niphal*'s] ingressive-stative and causative-reflexive functions' (IBHS §23.5b; cf. 23.3c; 23.4h). On *niphal* in relation to the *hithpael*, see Siebesma, *Function of the niphal in Biblical Hebrew*, SSN 28, Assen, 1991, 167-69. See also IBHS §26.1.2c.

²⁶⁴ Cf. the phrase כל הדברים האלה הכתובים אל בבל in Jer 51.60. Fischer compares the language in 25.13 to the phrase הכתובה בספר הזה in Deut 28.58; 29.19-20, 26; 30.10 and similar phrases in Jos 1.8; 2 Kgs 22.13; 23.2, 21; 2 Chr 34.21, 31. Fischer, *Jeremia 1-25*, HThKAT, Freiburg, 2005, 741.

second person singular instances of נבא in Jer 11.21 and 25.30 are somewhat unclear; however, most commentators understand Jeremiah as the subject.²⁶⁵ Other named individuals are the subject of the verb as well. Hananiah is the subject of the verb in Jer 28.6, where Jeremiah asks YHWH to establish (קום) the words he has prophesied.

The most frequent subject for finite forms of נבא is the plural נביאים (Jer 2.8; 5.31; 23.21; 28.8; 37.19). It is not possible to identify a specific group to which the plural נביאים refers. In a dialogue between Jeremiah and king Zedekiah (37.17–21), Jeremiah asks the king, ‘where are your prophets who prophesied to you?’ (ואיה Q נביאיכם אשר נבאו לכם), assuming some relationship between the king and a group of prophets.²⁶⁶ The reference to the prophets of Samaria in 23.13 is paralleled by two references to the prophets of Jerusalem in 23.14, 15.

2.2.3. Verbal phrases with נבא

The syntax of the verb נבא can be analysed constructively by looking at the prepositional constructions used with it. These collocations are arranged by preposition in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Verbal phrases with נבא

Collocation	Binyan	Object	References
נבא אל-	niphal	אליהם העיר הזאת הבית הזה העיר הזאת ארצות רבות	Jer 25.30 Jer 26.11 Jer 26.12 Jer 26.12 Jer 28.8
נבא את-	niphal	הדברים האלה	Jer 20.1
נבא ב-	niphal	בעל שקר שם יהוה שם	Jer 2.8 Jer 5.31 Jer 11.21; 26.9 Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25; 27.15; 29.9, 21

²⁶⁵ See, e.g., Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 423.

²⁶⁶ There are other instances of נביאיכם (‘your prophets’) in Jeremiah, though none of them refer directly to a Judaeen monarch (Jer 2.30; 27.9, 16; 29.8). The possessive suffix in 27.9 refers to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon, who are listed in 27.3. In the context of Jeremiah’s letter to the exiles, the possessive suffixes of נביאיכם and קסמיכם (‘your diviners’) in 29.8 refers back to אשר הגליתי כל הגולה (‘those whom I have exiled’) in 29.4. See also נביאיהם (‘their prophets’) in 2.26; 32.32.

נבא על-	niphal	כל הגוים	Jer 25.13
		העיר הזאת	Jer 26.20
		הארץ הזאת	Jer 26.20
		ממלכות גדלות	Jer 28.8
נבא ל-	niphal	העם	Jer 14.16
		לכם	Jer 23.16
		אדניכם	Jer 27.10 (cf. 27.4)
		לכם	Jer 27.14 (cf. 27.12)
		לשקר	Jer 27.15
		לכם	Jer 27.16
		שלום	Jer 28.9
		לכם	Jer 29.9, 21, 31
התנבא ל-	hithpael	לכם	Jer 14.14 (cf. 14.11)
		לכם	Jer 29.27 (cf. 29.25)
התנבא ב-	hithpael	בעל	Jer 23.13
		שם יהוה	Jer 26.20

The phrases נבא אל- (Jer 25.30, 26.11, 12, 28.8)²⁶⁷ and נבא על- (25.13; 26.20)²⁶⁸ show very little semantic difference in their usage. In 25.30 the phrases תנבא אליהם and אמרת אליהם are parallel, but the referent of the prepositional suffixes is unclear. It is possible the reference to 'YHWH's dispute with the nations' (ריב ליהוה בגוים) in 25.31 hints that the suffixes refer to גוים. This would correlate with the use of 'against the nations' (על כל) (הגוים) with נבא in 25.13. In 26.11, 12 and 28.8 the preposition אל refers to geographical or physical spaces; this also the case for the preposition על used with נבא in 26.20. Because the one instance of the verb in 28.8 takes both אל ארצות רבות and על ממלכות גדלות as its object, the prepositions appear to be used synonymously.

In only one instances does the verb נבא take a direct object marked with את. The collocation נבא את- in Jer 20.1 takes הדברים האלה as its object. In this passage, Jeremiah prophesies words which Pashhur the chief priest hears (שמע *qal*).

Except for Jer 28.8, in every instance of the collocations נבא ל- and התנבא ל- the use is datival and the sense can be broadly classified as 'in regard to' (14.14, 16; 23.16; 27.10, 14, 15, 16; 28.9; 29.9, 21, 27, 31).²⁶⁹ The activity signified by the verb in these instances is done on behalf of the referent of the preposition. There also appears to be no semantic

²⁶⁷ Cf. Ezek 6.2; 13.2, 16; 21.2, 7; 36.1; 37.9; Amos 7.15.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Ezek 4.7; 11.4; 13.17; 25.2; 28.21; 29.2; 34.2; 36.6; 37.9; 38.2; 39.1; 1 Chr 25.2, 3; Amos 7.16.

²⁶⁹ IBHS §11.2.10d. Cf. Joel 3.1, as well as the collocation התנבא על- in 2 Chr 18.7; 20.37, 1 Kgs 22.8.

difference between the *niphal* and *hithpael* that suggests a ‘negative’ connotation to the *hithpael* forms. They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs.²⁷⁰

The collocations **נבא ב־** (Jer 2.8; 5.31; 11.21; 14.14, 15; 23.25; 26.9; 27.15; 29.9, 21)²⁷¹ and **התנבא ב־** (23.13; 26.20) take either **בעל**, **שקר** or **שם (יהוה)**. In the one instance of the phrase **נבאו בשקר**, the sense of the preposition is adverbial; the phrase would then be translated as ‘they prophesied *falsely*’. In the remaining instances where these collocations are used with **שם (יהוה)** and **בעל**, the preposition **ב** is used circumstantially. The association between the verbal action and either **שם (יהוה)** or **בעל** signifies the means by which the verbal action is performed.²⁷²

2.2.4. Summary

The most frequent association with verbs from **נבא** is with the lexeme **נביא**. The most frequent subject for finite forms of **נבא** is the plural **נביאים**, but it is not possible to identify securely a specific group to which the plural **נביאים** refers. As a denominative, the verb does not often take a direct object. Thus, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The verb uses the prepositions **על** and **אל** nearly synonymously, and the preposition **ב** in a dative sense, meaning ‘in regard to’. There appears to be no semantic difference between the *niphal* and *hithpael* that suggests a ‘negative’ connotation to the *hithpael* forms. They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs.

2.3. Paradigmatic data

Paradigmatic and syntagmatic relations between the verb forms will clarify the semantic field of **נבא**.²⁷³ Words with a paradigmatic relation to **נבא** will mostly be found in parallel to it.²⁷⁴ These words are found in Table 9, which is discussed in detail below.

²⁷⁰ This does not necessarily contradict the view, ‘So bezeichnet das Ni. in der Mehrzahl der Fälle prophetisches Reden, das Hitp. dagegen kaum, sondern zumeist äußerlich sichtbare Seiten prophetischer Tätigkeit.’ Jeremias, **נָבִיא**, THAT II, 16.

²⁷¹ Cf. 1 Chr 25.1.

²⁷² See IBHS §11.2.5d–e.

²⁷³ The synonym **נטף** *hiphil* (‘drip’) for **נבא** *niphal*, and **שגע** *pual* (‘be mad’) for **נבא** *hithpael* are suggested in DCH V, 591.

²⁷⁴ Words such as prepositions, proper names and particles have been excluded from this list. It is more

Table 9. Parallel and paradigmatic lexemes and collocations with נבא

Lexeme	Binyan	Form		Gloss	References
אהב	qal	finite	x1	'love'	Jer 5.31
אמר	qal	finite	x7	'say'	Jer 2.8; 14.15; 23.17 (x3); 25.30; 26.18
אמר	qal	finite	x1	'say'	Jer 23.25
אמר אל-	qal	finite	x1	'say'	Jer 25.30
אמר	qal	participle	x2	'say'	Jer 14.15; 23.17
אמר	qal	inf abs	x1	'say'	Jer 23.17
בטח על	hiphil	finite	x1	'trust'	Jer 29.31
גער ב	qal	finite	x1	'rebuke'	Jer 29.27
דבר אל	piel	finite	x1	'speak'	Jer 23.21
דבר על	piel	finite	x1	'speak'	Jer 25.13
הבל	hiphil	finite	x1	'make empty'	Jer 23.16
הלכ אחרי	qal	finite	x1	'go after'	Jer 2.8
חלם	qal	finite	x1	'dream'	Jer 23.25
ידע	qal	finite	x1	'know'	Jer 2.8
לאמר	qal	inf cstr	x1	'say'	Jer 26.9
מות	qal	finite	x1	'die'	Jer 11.21
נאף	qal	inf abs	x1	'commit adultery'	Jer 23.14
ספר	piel	finite	x1	'announce'	Jer 23.32
עמד	qal	finite	x1	'stand'	Jer 19.14
פשע ב-	qal	finite	x1	'rebel'	Jer 2.8
צוה	piel	finite	x2	'command'	Jer 14.14; 23.32
רדה על	qal	finite	x1	'scrape out'	Jer 5.31
רוץ	qal	finite	x1	'run'	Jer 23.21
שגע	pual	participle	x1	'be mad'	Jer 29.26
שלח	qal	finite	x10	'send'	Jer 14.14, 15; 19.14; 23.21, 32; 26.12; 28.9; 29.9, 31
שלח ב	qal	finite	x1	'send'	Jer 28.9
תעה	hiphil	finite	x2	'lead astray'	Jer 23.13, 32

Twice Jeremiah is described as being sent in order to prophesy; these are the only two instances of the infinitive construct להנבא in the book (Jer 19.14; 26.12).²⁷⁵

helpful to comment on particular collocations and syntactic constructions. This analysis follows Table 1.

²⁷⁵ When Jeremiah returns from Topheth to Jerusalem, he is described as standing (עמד) in the temple and speaking (אמר) to all of the people (Jer 19.14).

Verbs related to speech are paradigmatically related to verbal forms of **נבא**. This is evident in a text such as Jer 25.30, where YHWH instructs Jeremiah both to prophesy (תנבא) and to speak (אמרת).²⁷⁶ Similar instances include the *qal* participle אמרים referring to the same activity as the *niphal* participle הנבאים in 14.15, the quotation formula לאמר introducing speech resulting from the verb נבא in 26.9, and the phrase היה נבא standing in parallel with אמר *qal* in 26.18. Similarly, דבר *piel* signifies the same activity as נבא in 23.21, and the relative clause ‘which Jeremiah prophesied against all the nations’ (אשר נבא ירמיהו על כל הגוים) refers to the same speech that YHWH declared (דבר *piel*) and that is ‘written in this scroll’ (הכתוב בספר הזה) in 25.13.

Two verbs describe closely related action in Jer 23.17; those who prophesy deceitful dreams report them (ספר *piel*) and lead the people astray (תעה *hiphil*). The verb תעה *hiphil* is paradigmatically related to נבא in 23.13 where the two phrases ‘they prophesied by Ba’al and led my people astray’ (הנבאו בבעל ויתעו את עמי את ישראל) parallel one another. Similarly, prophesying is negatively identified as ‘emptying’ or ‘deluding’ (הבל *hiphil*) in 23.16. The lexeme שגע *pual* appears in parallel with נבא in the phrase ‘for every madman and prophet’ (לכל איש משגע ומתנבא) in 29.26; these verbs describe activity in the Jerusalem temple which priests are expected to regulate.²⁷⁷

Words which have the same subject of verbal forms of **נבא** and are used in parallel are אמר *qal* in Jer 23.17, חלם *qal* in 23.25, and בטח *hiphil* in 29.31 (cf. 28.16). These forms are not as strongly associated with **נבא** as those with paradigmatic relations (see above), but they still describe similar behaviours and outcomes associated with **נבא**.

Two instances of finite verbs from **נבא** are associated with צוה *piel* where YHWH claims that he did not send nor command individuals who prophesy (Jer 14.14; 23.32).²⁷⁸ In 23.21, prophets are criticised for prophesying (נבא *niphal*) without being sent (שלח *qal*) by YHWH; likewise, they are criticised for running (רוץ *qal*) without being spoken to (דבר *piel*) by YHWH. Jeremiah is threatened to either stop prophesying or die (מות *qal*) in 11.21.

²⁷⁶ Both verbs in Jer 25.30 use the prepositional phrase אליהם. See above.

²⁷⁷ On משגע and the notion of prophetic ‘madness’, see HALOT II, 1415; Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy, 282-85.

²⁷⁸ In Jer 14.14 it is specified that a נביא is the subject of the verb נבא, while in 23.32 the participial phrase נבאי חלמות שקר does not necessarily refer to the lexeme נביא.

The remaining verbs in Table 9 parallel נבא but are associated with a different grammatical subject: ידע *qal* and אמר *qal* (Jer 2.8); רדה *qal* and אהב *qal* (5.31); גער *qal* (29.27).

2.4. Summary of נבא

Earlier, I have summarised the syntagmatic relations of נבא in detail (§2.2.4, p. 72.); I will provide a rough outline of the results here. נביא is the most frequent subject of נבא, especially the plural נביאים. It is not possible to identify these נביאים with a particular group on semantic grounds. Since it is denominative, the verb does not often use a direct object; thus one tends to prophesy about, with, or concerning something. This is true for both *niphal* and *hithpael* forms, with no indication that the *hithpael* is negative or derogatory.

In terms of the verb's paradigmatic relations, it is verbs related to speech (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, ספר *piel*) that appear most closely related to נבא. Other verbs put the activities of dreaming (חלם *qal*), trust (בטח *hiphil*), and misleading (תעה *hiphil*) in parallel with נבא. Thus, these activities are at least conceptually related on a semantic level as they describe similar behaviours and activities related to prophesying.

3. Conclusion

Out of all the occurrences of נביא in Jeremiah, nearly half of them are collocated together with a proper name. Frequently used collocations combine the lexemes נביא and כהן, and include כל-עבדי הנביאים. Stökl also noted the parallels between נביא and כהן, suggesting that these and other parallels suggest that the נביא are also counted as 'members of the elite'.²⁷⁹ He concludes that '[t]he frequency with which the נביא is mentioned with the elites of the people in those writings set around the end of the Judean monarchy and exile suggest that the נביא was part of the establishment of Judean society'.²⁸⁰ I am less convinced that the semantic data demonstrates these claims. Instead, I prefer to say that the כהן and נביא seem to share similar *functions* and *concerns* related to worship and service rendered to YHWH, and ascertaining his will.

²⁷⁹ Stökl, נביא/נביאָה, SAHD, §5, A.3. Compare this with his claim that '[t]he נביא seems to have been an official, professional prophet.' Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 200.

²⁸⁰ Stökl, נביא/נביאָה, SAHD, §7.

The semantic field whose verbs most frequently takes נביא as a subject is communication (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, יען *qal*, מנע *qal*, נאם *qal*, נגד *hiphil*, ספר *piel*, ענה *qal*), command or instruction (צוה *piel*, קום *hiphil* and שלח *qal*), and worship and religious service (אהב *qal*, בטח *hiphil*, חוה *hishtaphel*, עבד *qal*, פנה *qal*, שוב *hiphil*, שמע *hiphil*). The semantic field of purity or integrity (חנף *qal*, שים *qal*, תעה *hiphil*) is also significant. These data also contrast somewhat with Stökl's view that 'the Hebrew root \sqrt{nb} is connected to divination'.²⁸¹ From a semantic perspective, in Jeremiah at least, it is more accurate to say that נביא is associated with communication and religious service, which is then used in divinatory practice.

Paradigmatic relationships between מלך and שר and between כהן and נביא are interrelated and follow a semantic pattern: as מלך relates to שר, so כהן relates to נביא. The closest word to נביא, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is כהן, and the two are used together as a 'word pair'. This is a major conclusion. It is a semantic piece of evidence which suggests that the נביא and כהן are both related to the same domain of activity, particularly the cult.²⁸² One should be careful not to assume that this is evidence for a sociological assertion that there is a specific *type* of 'cultic' prophets associated with temples as professionals.²⁸³ Rather, it suggests that both the כהן and נביא are associated with shared concerns for the 'proper conventions for worshipping YHWH'.²⁸⁴ This view is supported further by the semantic associations נביא shares with the domain of worship and religious service noted above.

The most frequent association with verbs from נבא is with the lexeme נביא. This is not unexpected, given that נביא is a denominative. The most frequent subject for finite forms of נבא is the plural נביאים, but it is not possible to identify securely a specific group to which the plural נביאים refers. I do not find a semantic basis for viewing the plural נביאים negatively in contrast with the singular נביא. Thus, I conclude that the view that the plural נביאים 'apparaissent toujours comme un groupe, une classe, ou une sorte de corporation dont les membres restent anonymes' and 'apparaissent sous un jour défavor-

²⁸¹ Stökl, נביא/נביאה, SAHD, §5, A.1.

²⁸² This confirms a view already held among some scholars. See, e.g. Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 167; Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, in: *The Priests in the Prophets*, ed. Grabbe and Bellis, London, 2004, 203-09; Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, BZAW 352, Berlin, 2005, 29.

²⁸³ Against the views found, e.g., in Jeremias, נביא, THAT II, 10; Bergman, Ringgren, and Dommershausen, פהן, ThWAT IV (1984), 77-78.

²⁸⁴ Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 192.

able' cannot be upheld on semantic grounds.²⁸⁵ Semantic associations between both singular and plural forms of נביא are very similar.

As a denominative, the verb does not often take a direct object. Thus, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The verb uses the prepositions אל and על nearly synonymously, the preposition ב in a dative sense, meaning 'in regard to'. As a result, one should not place too much exegetical weight on -נבא על- as an indication of criticism or a position *against* something. The 'critical' aspect of prophecy has often been privileged in biblical interpretation, and clearly pertains to the content of prophetic messages in addition to the semantics of the verb נבא.²⁸⁶ As I will make clear in my close reading, this point has major influence on the interpretation of Jer 28.8–9, one of the most critically important texts used to uphold the distinction between 'types' of prophets.²⁸⁷

There appears to be no semantic difference between the *niphal* and *hithpael* that suggests a 'negative' connotation to the *hithpael* forms.²⁸⁸ They are used in parallel to describe the same activity and parallel some of the same verbs. *Hithpael* forms of נבא have often been read as references to 'false' prophetic behaviours in the 'true' versus 'false' debate.²⁸⁹ This distinction cannot be upheld on the basis of verbal forms of נבא. Thus the contrast between 'ecstatic' and 'rational' forms of prophetic behaviours is not upheld on a semantic level.

Verbs related to speech (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, ספר *piel*) are paradigmatically related to verbal forms of נבא. Verbal forms of נבא are used in parallel with verbs for dreaming (חלם *qal*), trust (בטח *hiphil*), and misleading (תעה *hiphil*). These verbs are all used to describe similar behaviours, and they are associated with the outcomes and results of prophesying (e.g. Jer 23.25–32). In my view, the semantic associations with dreaming are quite signific-

²⁸⁵ Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 149–55, cit. 150.

²⁸⁶ The 'critical' element of prophecy was widely known in the ancient Near East. On this point, see Nissinen, Das kritischen Potential.

²⁸⁷ See chapter 5, section 4.3, pp. 183–191. In support of this claim, see, e.g., Jong, *Isaiah*, 311–13; Jong, Fallacy of "True and False", 16–19.

²⁸⁸ Meyer, *Jeremia und die falschen Propheten*, 60–62; Wilson, Prophecy and Ecstasy, *JBL* 98 (1979), 335–36; Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 156–57.

²⁸⁹ See, for example, Lundbom's interpretation of the *hithpael* form of נבא in Jer 29.27. He reads this accusation, along with Parker, as an attempt to discredit Jeremiah by 'comparing him to earlier ecstatic prophets or prophets still around who show the old characteristics.' Parker, Possession Trance and Prophecy, 282; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, AncB 21B, New York, 2004, 364–65.

ant for the study of prophecy. There is ongoing debate over the distinction between prophecy and dreams; Stökl sharply distinguishes between dreaming and prophesying,²⁹⁰ while Huffmon and Nissinen classify them together.²⁹¹ In this debate, because of the semantic data, I would side with Huffmon and Nissinen. The exegetical significance of this point will be made clear in my reading of Jer 23.25–32.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 10, 98, 222–23.

²⁹¹ Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 48, passim; Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21–22; Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Mari Texts*, in: *Tradition and Innovation in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Archi, Winona Lake, IN, 2015, 205–13, esp. 208–9. Also in support of this view is Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 56–57.

²⁹² See chapter 4, section 4, pp. 144–155.

Part II. Close reading

Chapter 3. Jeremiah 1.4–19

1. Preliminary remarks

In a mixture of dialogue, oracles and vision reports, Jer 1.4–19 provides one of the most direct descriptions of what it means to be a prophet in the book of Jeremiah. The themes of the text are programmatic; the descriptions of prophetic activity found here are closely related to those found elsewhere in the book. In short, this is a rich and foundational text for major themes in Jeremiah. The pericope of 1.4–19 is thematically unified as its contents fall into three main sections: a report of dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah in 1.4–10; a pair of vision reports which warn of YHWH's judgment in 1.11–14; and an oracle of support in the face of threat in 1.15–19.

2. Jeremiah 1.4–10

The account of YHWH appointing Jeremiah as a נביא לגוים in Jer 1.4–10 ranks among the most famous texts in the book. It is basically a report of a dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah as the deity legitimises his prophet and assigns him tasks. Concepts related to 'nations' and 'kingdoms' mark thematic boundaries of 1.4–10, as YHWH makes Jeremiah a נביא לגוים and tells him to prophesy concerning nations and kingdoms in 1.10. Many of the features of this text are rightly celebrated as rather unique; at the same time, and in an equally important sense, many of its features are fairly conventional.

2.1. Text and translation

ויהי דבר יהוה אלי לאמר (4)

בטרם אצורך²⁹³ בבטן ידעתך ובטרם תצא מרחם הקדשתיך נביא לגוים נתתיך (5)

²⁹³ K אֶצְרֶךָ, Q אֶצְרֶךָ. The two readings are closely related. It seems that K אֶצְרֶךָ is a *plene* spelling derived from צור III ('fashion, form, shape'), which itself may be a related form of יצר; see HALOT I, 428–29, II 1015–16; Gesenius¹⁸, 1111; Zorell, 687. The lexeme צור III appears only in 1 Kgs 7.15; the form in Exod 32.4 is disputed. Some cognates may shed additional light on צור III, such as Palmyrene *šwr* I *qal* in DNWSI II, 965 KBL, 799; or Aramaic צור in ATTM I, 675; Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, Dictionaries of Talmud, Midrash and Targum 3, Ramat-Gan, 2002, 956. Cf. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, 272, 294. In contrast, Q אֶצְרֶךָ, read אֶצְרֶךָ, derives from יצר *qal* ('form'); see Isa 44.2, 24; 49.5 (cf. Gen

- ואמר אהה אדני יהוה הנה לא ידעתי דבר כי נער אנכי (6)
 ויאמר יהוה אלי אל תאמר נער אנכי כי על כל אשר אשלחך תלך ואת כל אשר
 אצוך תדבר (7)
 אל תירא מפניהם כי אתך אני להצלך נאם יהוה (8)
 וישלח יהוה את ידו ויגע על פי ויאמר יהוה אלי הנה נתתי דברי בפיך (9)
 ראה הפקדתיך היום הזה על הגוים ועל הממלכות לנתוש ולנתוץ ולהאביד ולהרוס (10)
 לבנות ולנטוע

- (4) There was a word of YHWH to me:
 (5) Before I formed you in the belly, I knew you; before you went out of the womb, I consecrated you; a prophet to the nations I appointed you.
 (6) And I said, Ah! But Lord YHWH, I do not know how to speak, for I am an attendant.
 (7) YHWH said to me, Do not say 'I am an attendant', but go everywhere I send you, and speak everything I command you.
 (8) Fear not on their account, for I am with you to deliver you, oracle of YHWH.
 (9) And YHWH stretched out his hand and touched my mouth, and YHWH said to me, Look, I have placed my words in your mouth.
 (10) See, I have appointed you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to uproot and to tear down, and to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.

2.2. Prophet to the nations

In a basic sense, the text of Jer 1.4–10 is a reported dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah. The opening verse in 1.4 relates that a word from YHWH came to Jeremiah (וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה) and it marks the initial boundary of the text unit. The pericope uses the first person in this opening phrase and in 1.6, 11, 13 (cf. 2.1; 13.8; 16.1; 18.5; 24.4).²⁹⁴ The word introduced by 1.4 primarily consists of instructions and encouragement from YHWH as he commands Jeremiah to prophesy.

2.7; Isa 42.6; 43.7; 45.9). For the lexeme יָצַר, see HALOT I, 428–29; DCH III, 269–70; VII, 107; Even-Shoshan II, 908; Otzen, יָצַר, ThWAT III (1982), 830–39; Konkel, יָצַר, NIDOTTE II (1996), 503–6. I find it preferable to follow Q אֲצַרְךָ, though there is only a slight difference in meaning (see GKB, §26e, §31h).

²⁹⁴ On the *Wortereignisformel*, see Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, I, BKAT XIII/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1969, 38*. On the form in Jeremiah, see Neumann, »Das Wort, das geschehen ist«, VT 23 (1973), 171–217; Levin, Das Wort Jahwes an Jeremia, ZThK 101 (2004), 257–80. The phrase is similar to other markers of divine speech and here in 1.4 the most basic function of the phrase is to report a divine message and to introduce the dialogue in 1.4–10. As Meier notes: 'The excessive ordinariness' of the Hebrew phrase וַיְהִי דְבַר יְהוָה and its Akkadian cognate *awatu bašû* 'may be grasped by inquiring of the alternatives if one wished to be as minimally descriptive as possible when observing that communication had occurred: it is precisely this phrase that would be chosen: "there was a word".' Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 318.

A very influential form-critical assessment considers Jer 1.4–10 a ‘call narrative’, a conventional literary pattern in texts where an individual is summoned for a particular task or appointed to a particular role by the deity.²⁹⁵ As the form is usually discussed in the case of Jer 1.4–10, the dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah uses established tropes, such as an objection, a word of reassurance, and a sign, to describe YHWH’s role in legitimising the one who is called. In Jeremiah’s case, this fundamentally has to do with this function as a *נביא לגוים*.²⁹⁶ At times, this form-critical judgment can lapse into the ‘old paradigm’ of prophecy, which valorises the individual and his ‘peculiar personal relationship’ with God; Habel asserts that the ‘prophetic call narratives are much more than autobiographical records. They are traumatic public proclamations in which the prophet announces his divine commission and thereby commits himself openly to the secret, inner compulsion from God.’²⁹⁷ In this view, ‘calling’ is that special personal quality that justifies a prophet, and that distinguishes him from other religious specialists; as Orlinsky put it, ‘divination was a craft, and prophecy a calling.’²⁹⁸ As I will show, there are other factors at play in this text; prophetic legitimation and authority depends on other cultural factors. Jer 1.4–10, along with the other ‘call narratives’, has the implicit view that human agents perform certain tasks with divine support, or in accordance with the divine will.

²⁹⁵ Usually counted among ‘call narratives’ are the texts of Exod 3.1–12; Jdg 6.11b–17; 1 Sam 3; Isa 6.1–13; 40.1–11; Ezek 1.1–3.15; Am 7.10–15. See Fohrer, *Die Gattung der Berichte*, ZAW 44 (1952), 101–20; Kutsch, *Gideons Berufung*, TLZ 81 (1956), 75–84; Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments*, II, 62–82; Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*; Habel, *Form and Significance of the Call Narratives*, ZAW 77 (1965), 297–323; Kilian, *Die prophetischen Berufungsberichte*, in: *Theologie im Wandel*, Tübingen Theologische Reihe 1, München/Freiburg im Breisgau, 1967, 356–76; Baltzer, *Office and Calling of the Prophet*, HTR 61 (1968), 567–81; Zimmerli, *Ezechiel*, I, 16–21; Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufungsberichte*, FRLANT 101, Göttingen, 1970; Gouders, *Theologie der prophetischen Berufung*, BibLeb 12 (1971), 79–93; Olmo Lete, *Morfología de los relatos*, Claretianum 12 (1972), 177–224; Vieweger, *Berufungsberichte Jeremias und Ezechiels*, BEAT 6, Frankfurt am Main, 1986; Grätz, »Einen Propheten wie mich«, in: *Moses in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Tradition*, ed. Graupner and Wolter, BZAW 372, Berlin, 2007, 61–77.

²⁹⁶ See Habel, *Form and Significance of the Call Narratives*, 297–301. There are also, however, many clear differences between the ‘call narrative texts’, and at times they have more in common with non-‘call-narrative’ texts than with each other (e.g. Jer 1.4–10 and Isa 49.1–6). See Miller, *Prophetic Conflict in Second Isaiah*, in: *Wort–Gebot–Glaube*, ed. Stoebe, ATANT 59, Zürich, 1970, 77–85; Vermeulen, *La rédaction de Jérémie* 1.4–19, ETL 58 (1982), 271–72.

²⁹⁷ Habel, *Form and Significance of the Call Narratives*, 306. Cf. Herrmann, *Jeremia. Der Prophet und das Buch*, 200.

²⁹⁸ Orlinsky, *Seer in Ancient Israel*, OrAnt 4 (1965), 156.

2.2.1. Divine support

In the opening part of the dialogue, YHWH makes a series of reassuring statements to Jeremiah, culminating in YHWH appointing (נָתַן *qal*) Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations (נָבִיא לְגוֹיִם). In conjunction with this act, YHWH describes how his support for Jeremiah began even before he was born. There is not much semantic difference between the three descriptions of YHWH's activity in Jer 1.5, as all three verbs describe acts where YHWH prepares Jeremiah for his task.²⁹⁹ They all express the same basic idea, namely, that Jeremiah's prophetic task originates completely in YHWH's action (c. 1.7, 9–10, 17–19). Before YHWH fashioned him in the belly, the deity knew (יָדַע *qal*) him; YHWH can 'know' a person's inner intentions (12.3; cf. 17.16), and here the verb indicates a sense of special care or concern (15.15; 29.11, 26).³⁰⁰ Before he went out of the womb,³⁰¹ YHWH consecrated (קָדַשׁ *hiphil*) him; here the verb has the sense 'to set apart' for a particular purpose, and this is the same sense in the only other occurrence of the verb in Jeremiah (cf. 12.3).³⁰² Finally, YHWH appointed (נָתַן *qal*) him a prophet to the nations; this lexeme is immensely flexible and has a wide semantic range, in this instance meaning 'appoint'.³⁰³

Some of the conventional aspects of Jer 1.4–10 are apparent from the initial description of YHWH's action in 1.5. The description of Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet to the nations uses several well-known motifs that play a part in confirming the authority YHWH invests in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah's appointment as a prophet to the nations was apart from his own initiative or decision, as the source and impulse for the call is YHWH alone.³⁰⁴ Other texts in the book express similar ideas. Jeremiah is also appointed a 'fortified city' (עִיר מְבֻצָּר), an iron pillar (עַמּוּד בְּרִזָּל), and a bronze wall (חֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת) in 1.18.³⁰⁵ Similarly, the verb phrase

²⁹⁹ On the virtual synonymy of the three main verbs in Jer 1.5, see Botterweck, »Gott erkennen«, BBB 2, Bonn, 1951, 19–20.

³⁰⁰ For this sense with YHWH as subject, see DCH IV, 100–1.

³⁰¹ The lexemes נָתַן and רָחַם appear together in Isa 46.3; Jer 1.5; Ps 22.11; 58.4; Job 3.11; 10.18–19; 31.15.

³⁰² See DCH VII, 193–94.

³⁰³ See DCH V, 807–10.

³⁰⁴ 'Zum propheten wird man berufen, nicht geboren.' Herrmann, *Jeremia*, BKAT 12/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1986, 57. See also Aeschmann, *Jérémie*, Neuchâtel, 1959, 44–45; Mottu, Aux sources de notre vocation, *RThPh* 114 (1982), 107.

³⁰⁵ Jer 1.18–19 forms a doublet with 15.20, where the images of עִיר מְבֻצָּר and חֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת in 1.18 are combined in the phrase חֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת בְּצוּרָה ('fortified wall of bronze'). On this doublet, see Jüngling, Ich mache

נתתיך is also found in 6.27, where YHWH appoints Jeremiah as an ‘assayer’ (בחון) of his people. One further text does not refer to Jeremiah or a prophet, but rather to the priest Zephaniah ben Maaseiah in 29.25. His colleague Shemaiah the Nehelamite uses a similar description to remind Zephaniah that YHWH appointed him (נתנך) as a priest in order to oversee the temple and regulate the behaviour of a madman (משגא) or prophet (מתנבא) in the Jerusalem temple.

Similar descriptions in the Hebrew Bible confirm the conventional nature of the phrases in Jer 1.5. General similarities are found in poetic texts that describe YHWH's care for the unborn, or YHWH's work forming a child in the womb (e.g. Job 31.15; Ps 139.13; Qoh 11.5). YHWH has plans and tasks in mind for great figures in Israel's history before they are born (Judg 13.5; Exod 2; 1 Sam 1.1–2.10).³⁰⁶ Supportive claims in Deutero-Isaiah bear close resemblance to Jer 1.5. YHWH reassures Jacob that he has helped him ‘since birth’ (מבטן) and encourages him not to be afraid (אל תירא) as in Jer 1.5 and 1.8. In Isa 49.1–6 YHWH calls (קרא *qal*) and names (זכר *hiphil*) his servant while in the womb (cf. ממעי and מבטן), much like Jer 1.5, and the two phrases נתתיך לאיר גוים (Isa 49.5) and נתתיך נביא לגוים (Jer 1.5) are extremely similar.³⁰⁷ These are kindred uses of the motif in oracles of encouragement and support.

Motifs related to divine selection before birth also are found in royal texts and archives throughout the ancient Near East.³⁰⁸ Kings in Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Levant claimed that they were divinely chosen by the gods to rule; this characterisation was typically extended to the point that kings were often regarded as semi-divine as well.³⁰⁹ These descriptions are related to the idea that a king's claim to rule was legitimated and

dich zu einer ehernen Mauer, *Bib.* 54 (1973), 11–17; Herrmann, Die Herkunft der »ehernen Mauer«, in: *Altes Testament und christliche Verkündigung*, ed. Oeming and Graupner, Stuttgart, 1987, 344–52; Parke-Taylor, *Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, SBLMS 51, Atlanta, GA, 2000, 35–40; Riede, *Ich mache dich zur festen Stadt*, FzB 121, Würzburg, 2009; Maier, Jeremiah as YHWH's Stronghold, VT 64 (2014), 640–53.

³⁰⁶ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, Hermeneia, Minneapolis, MN, 1986, 28.

³⁰⁷ E.g. Vermeylen, La rédaction de Jérémie 1,4–19, 266.

³⁰⁸ Paul, Cuneiform Light on Jer 9,20, *Bib.* 49 (1968), 184–86; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 97–98; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 27–28; Ruprecht, Berufung Jeremias, in: *Schöpfung und Befreiung*, ed. Albertz, Golka, and Kegler, Stuttgart, 1989, 79–91; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 231. See for example the election motif and its connection to divine conceptions of kingship in Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, Uppsala, 1943, 4, 16–17, 57–58, 76–78; Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, Oriental Institute Essay, Chicago, 1948.

³⁰⁹ See, e.g., Engnell, *Studies in Divine Kingship*, 77; Brown, Divine Kingship to Dispersal of Power, ZAW 105 (1993), 62–86; Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, UBL 13, Münster, 1996, 232–91; Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism*, Oxford, 2001, 157–63.

upheld by the gods. A celebrated parallel to Jer 1.5 is found in the Gebel Barkal Stele of Piye, where Amon-Re assures Piye that he was selected to be king even while he was still in the womb:

‘I said concerning you (while you were) in the body of your mother, that you would be the ruler of Egypt. I recognized you in the semen when you were in the egg, that you would be lord of what I have made.’ (Gebel Barkal Stele no. 26 of year 3, ll. 2–6).³¹⁰

Similarities between the Stele of Piye and Jer 1.5 are readily apparent, and correspondences between the two texts have led some to argue for a case of direct literary borrowing.³¹¹ As Jeremiah is told that he was known ‘in the belly’ and consecrated ‘in the womb’ so also was the Egyptian king. Very similar descriptions are found in texts ranging from the XII to XXV dynasties, referring to kings such as Sesostri I,³¹² Hatshepsut,³¹³ and Rameses II.³¹⁴

Because the same kinds of claims are found in Mesopotamian texts as well, it suggests that we are dealing with a cultural motif rather than a case of literary borrowing. Examples of the motif of selection while still in the womb or before birth are found in Assyrian and Babylonian royal texts that document, for example, the reigns of Šulgi (2094–2047

³¹⁰ Cited from the transliteration and translation in Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy*, SBL.WAW 21, Atlanta, GA, 2009, 461–64. Other translations in COS II, 46. An influential article in the interpretation of this passage is Gilula, *Egyptian Parallel*, VT 17 (1967), 114. See also Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 57–58; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 27–28; Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 292–93.

³¹¹ The case might be strengthened by other Egyptian motifs used in Jer 1.18; the architectural image of the חֲמוֹת נְחֹשֶׁת (‘bronze wall’) may be related to Egyptian royal self-descriptions. The image of a fortified bronze wall which resists the onslaught of enemies is an aspect of Egyptian rhetoric intended to express divine support and protection of a royal figure. These similarities were first noted by Alt, *Hic murus aheneus esto*, ZDMG 86 (1933), 33–48. See also Herrmann, *Die Herkunft der »ehernen Mauer«*; Görg, *Die »ehernen Säulen«*, in: *Prophetie und geschichtliche Wirklichkeit im alten Israel*, ed. Liwak and Wagner, Stuttgart, 1991, 134–54; Riede, *Ich mache dich zur festen Stadt*, 35–38; Maier, *Jeremiah as YHWH’s Stronghold*.

³¹² Sesostri I (XII Dynasty) claims to have been ‘mighty in the egg’ and appointed king ‘before the swaddling-clothes were loosed for me’. ARE I, 243 §502. See also the ‘Praise of Sesostri I’ from *Sinuhe*, B 46–73 in COS I, 78; Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt*, Documenta mundi. Aegyptiaca 1, Jonsered, 1999, 91–96, §15. This and several other of the following examples are found in Wyatt, *Myths of Power*, 292.

³¹³ Khnum tells Hatshepsut ‘I have formed thee of these limbs of Amun, Presider over Karnak. I have come to thee to fashion thee better than all gods.’ ARE II, 82 §203.

³¹⁴ Rameses II claims that ‘I came from the womb, (already) armed with valour and victory, being alert, firm and renowned in conflict, coming as the child of the God, established on his throne’. ‘Rhetorical Stelae of Rameses II, Abu Simbel’ (C.20, C.22), Kitchen, *Poetry of Ancient Egypt*, 183–92, §30.

BCE),³¹⁵ Aššur-rēša-iši I (1132–1115 BCE),³¹⁶ Tukulti-ninurta II (890–884 BCE),³¹⁷ Ashurnasirpal II (883–859 BCE),³¹⁸ Assurbanipal (668–627 BCE),³¹⁹ and Nabonidus (555–540 BCE).³²⁰ In sum we can observe that the motif of divine selection prior to birth is a widespread phenomenon in royal self-descriptions aimed at legitimising the rule of the king.³²¹

Though there is great variation between Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian royal inscriptions, one of the most basic functions of these documents is like ‘propaganda’, in a non-pejorative sense. That is, as these documents sought ‘to disseminate or promote particular ideas’,³²² the claim of divine selection was an attempt to support the king’s claim to power, reassure his supporters, and dissuade enemies or rivals from opposing him.

This basic function is present in Jer 1.5.³²³ When YHWH expresses his support to Jeremiah with these claims, there is an implicit assumption that some will oppose him (cf. 1.8, 17–19). All of these kinds of declarations were intended to win support and deter opposition.³²⁴ Thus, a legitimising claim is at the heart of 1.5.

³¹⁵ ‘I was born for a prosperous reign, (Enlil) determined (even) from birth, a great <destiny>’. E3/2.1.2.54 l. 10, translation is from Frayne, *Ur III Period*, RIME 3/2, Toronto, 1997, 157.

³¹⁶ A.o.86.1 ll. 1–7, translation from Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Third and Second Millennia BC*, RIMA 1, Toronto, 1987, 310.

³¹⁷ A.o.100.1 ll. 14–25, translation from Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC*, RIME 2, Toronto, 1991, 165.

³¹⁸ In praise of Ishtar, the king claims: ‘Thou didst single me out with the glance of thine eyes; thou didst desire to see me rule’. Cited and translated in Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 239. Cf. Dhorme, *Religion assyro-babylonienne*, Paris, 1910, 156.

³¹⁹ Assurbanipal claims that that he is commissioned before birth, the one ‘dessen Namen Assur und Sin, der Herr der Tiara, seit fernen Tagen zur Königsherrschaft berufen haben, und den sie im Liebe seiner Mutter erschaffen haben zum Hirtentum über Assyrien’. Rassam Cylinder I 1–7. Translation cited from Borger, *Beiträge zum Inschriftenwerk Assurbanipals*, Wiesbaden, 1996, 208. See also Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 238.

³²⁰ ‘Sin and Nergal determined that he should rule when he was still in his mother’s womb’. Translation from COS II, 310. See also Langdon, *Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, VAB 4, Leipzig, 1912, 281; Berger, *Die Neubabylonischen Königsinschriften*, AOAT 4/1, Münster, 1973, 371–75.

³²¹ Further examples are found in Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, New Haven, CT, 1976, 158.

³²² Tadmor, Propaganda, Literature, Historiography, in: *Propaganda, Literature, Historiography*, ed. Parpola and Whiting, Helsinki, 1997, 332. See also Grayson, Politics and Propaganda in Ancient Mesopotamia, *BCSMS* 18 (1989), 25–33; Porter, ‘For the Astonishment of All Enemies’, *BCSMS* 35 (2000), 7–18.

³²³ See Ruprecht, Berufung Jeremias, 87; Stiglmair, »Prophet« und Gottesherrschaft, in: *Schöpfungsplan und Heilsgeschichte*, ed. Brandscheidt and Mende, Trier, 2002, 324; Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 144.

³²⁴ Though I have not followed his form-critical approach to the passage, Habel rightly asserts that ‘call narratives’ were public documents ‘designed to be preached or read’. Habel, Form and Significance of the Call Narratives, 306.

2.2.2. Nations and kingdoms

There are a wide range of opinions concerning the nature of Jeremiah's commission and the sense of the collocation נביא לגוים. The phrase could refer to the content of Jeremiah's oracles, meaning that they are focused on 'international' concerns (e.g. Jer 46–49). But, if the phrase נביא לגוים refers primarily to foreign nations, then why is so much of Jeremiah's prophetic activity directed toward Judah and Jerusalem?³²⁵ A fundamental part of the Jeremiah tradition is concerned with the fate of Judah at the hands of the Babylonians. Is Judah included among the גוים or does the phrase refer to 'foreign nations' exclusively?³²⁶

Second, since the book of Jeremiah contains major sections devoted to oracles against foreign nations (i.e. Jer 25.15–38; 46–51), the term נביא לגוים is sometimes thought to refer to some of the contents of the book instead of the prophet.³²⁷ If Jeremiah's commission to be a נביא לגוים is a reference to some of the contents of the book (i.e. 25.15–38; 46–51), then one might also ask why Jeremiah is singled out for the distinction among the

³²⁵ Sharp notes the unease in Giesebrecht's statement that 'kein wahrer Proph. zu den Heiden gesendet war'. Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*, HK III/2.1, Göttingen, 1907, 2; Sharp, Call of Jeremiah, *JBL* 119 (2000), 421; Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 83. Similar views led some scholars to emend גוים to a more satisfactory term. Stade proposed emending לגוים to לגוי ('to my nation') to resolve this problem; Stade, *Emendationen*, *ZAW* 22 (1902), 328. Similarly, Bruston emended גוים 'the nations' to גאים 'les grands'; Bruston, *Jérémie*, *ZAW* 27 (1907), 75–78. Among more recent works, Fischer notes how the foreign nations 'spielen überdies in vielen anderen Texten eine wichtige Rolle, insofern sie das Schicksal Jerusalems und Judas beeinflussen'. While true, this description is rather general; Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 134. Similarly, see Herrmann, *Jeremia*, BKAT 12/2, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1990, 199. Inversely one can contend that the phrase indicates that Jeremiah is a נביא לגוים insofar as his proclamations against Judah, the people's recalcitrance, and their subsequent judgment are lessons for Judah's neighbours; they are to learn from Judah's fate; see, e.g., Olmo Lete, La vocación personal, *Claretianum* 11 (1971), 66; Olmo Lete, *La vocación del líder*, Bibliotheca Salmanticensis 3/2, Salamanca, 1973, 278–79; Vermeulen, La rédaction de Jérémie 1,4–19, 273–76; Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 60–61.

³²⁶ Another option is to suggest that the 'nations' may be a reference to the communities of Judaeans dispersed outside of Palestine, and therefore among the nations. This does accord well with other passages in the book which are clearly concerned with displaced Judaeans (Jer 24.1–10; 29.3–14; 43.8–13), however it seems to read over the basic thrust of the phrase. Cf. Herrmann, Die Bewältigung der Krise Israels, in: *Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Theologie*, ed. Donner, Hanhart, and Smend, Göttingen, 1977, 167–69; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 96.

³²⁷ Römer represents this view and asserts that '1,5b et 10 présupposent toutes les grandes parties du livre et tentent d'en souligner la cohérence en faisant en même temps de Jérémie un personnage aussi incontournable que le Moïse de Dt 34,10–12.' Römer, Du livre au prophète, in: *Les recueils prophétiques de la Bible*, ed. Macchi, Nihan, Römer, and Rückl, MoBi(G) 64, Genève, 2012, 277. Fischer stresses this point when he asserts that 'ist Jer 1 nicht als biographische Schilderung einer Berufung mißzuverstehen' but the text rather 'hat vielmehr rahmende und orientierende Funktion für die Leser und ist wie andere solche Berichte von Beauftragungen eine theologische reflektierte Zusammenfassung'. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 143. For arguments concerning Jeremiah as a 'prophet like Moses', see chapter 3, section 2.4, page 96.

other prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible—all of which, except Hosea, contain oracles against foreign nations.³²⁸

To better understand the phrase גויים לגוי, it is helpful to survey of the semantic range and use of the lexeme גוי ('nation').³²⁹ The term shares a high degree of semantic overlap with the lexeme עם ('people').³³⁰ The main difference in sense between them, in the most general terms, is that עם tends to refer to a group of people who share kinship or ethnic ties, while גוי describes a federated group of people not primarily united from kinship or ethnic ties.³³¹ Put another way, one could generalise and say that a גוי is bound together by politics and people described as an עם are bound by kin. Speiser notes the basic units which comprise עם and גוי are אדם and איש respectively; one is made up of individuals while the other is a collective. Thus גוי 'even when not tied to the land or linked to a state, is a regimented body, e.g., when it crosses a stream or makes war.'³³²

The lexeme גוי has 87 occurrences in the book of Jeremiah, and the term עם ('people') has 162 occurrences in Jeremiah; only three instances of עם are plural (Jer 10.3; 34.1; 51.58).³³³ There is no use of the plural גוים to describe Israel or Judah in Jeremiah, but the singular גוי is used to describe one or the other (5.9, 29; 7.28; 9.8). The use of the first singular suffix in עמי ('my people') is frequently used to refer to Judah, whilst גוי never ap-

³²⁸ Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant*, 53-54. Cf. Fischer, *Der Prophet wie Mose*, BZABR 15, Wiesbaden, 2011, 400.

³²⁹ See DCH III, 329-34.

³³⁰ Speiser points out the absence of personal ties in the example of the 'table of nations' in Gen 10. Here the גוים are united by geography (בארצתם) and language (ללשונתם). Speiser, "People" and "Nation" of Israel, *JBL* 79 (1960), 159. See also Rost, Bezeichnungen für Land und Volk, in: *Festschrift Otto Procksch*, ed. Alt, Leipzig, 1934, 141; Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a *gôy*?, *VT* 14 (1964), 1-6. While עם is widely attested in Semitic languages, גוי occurs only in Hebrew and in Akkadian texts from Mari; see *gâ'u* (CAD V, 59); *gâ'um*, *gâwum* (AHw I, 284). On the military sense of *gâyum*, see Matthews, *Pastoral Nomadism in the Mari Kingdom*, ASOR Dissertation Series 3, Cambridge, MA, 1978, 63-65; Malamat, *Mari and the Early Israelite Experience*, Schweich Lectures 1984, Oxford, 1989, 38-39.

³³¹ Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a *gôy*?, 3.

³³² Speiser, "People" and "Nation" of Israel, 159-60. See also Hulst's summary of the distinction between עם and גוי: 'Als Begriff aus dem verwandtschaftlichen Bereich ist bei 'am die Zusammengehörigkeit von innen her gegeben und keineswegs erst durch äußere Umstände bedingt, während bei *gôj* eine naturgemäße Einheit, wenn schon vorhanden, nicht entscheidend zu sein scheint, weil gerade andere Faktoren mit im Spiele sind (entweder territoriale oder vor allem politische?)'. Hulst, עם/גוי, THAT II (1976), 294.. Cody understands the domain of גוי to be 'territory and government and what we would call today foreign relations.' Cody, When Is the Chosen People Called a *gôy*?, 5. See also Block, Nations/Nationality, NIDOTTE IV (1996), 966-67.

³³³ For relevant statistics, see Hulst, עם/גוי, THAT II, 294.

pears with a suffix in Jeremiah.³³⁴ Thus the book shows a preference for עַם when referring to Judah, but Judah's status as an עַם does not preclude it from also being a גוי. The terms עַם and גוי do appear in parallel, and Judah's status as YHWH's עַם does not disqualify it from being considered among the גוים (6.22; 50.41).³³⁵ A few examples are worth mentioning. In the context of 18.1–12, YHWH likens the house of Israel to clay in a potter's hand; the judgment described in this text against nations (גוים) and kingdoms (ממלכות) applies equally well to Judah and Jerusalem as it does foreign nations (18.7, 9). In several judgment oracles, YHWH asks rhetorically whether judgment should be brought against a nation such as this (בגוי אשר כזה), i.e. Judah (5.9, 29; 9.8). Jeremiah refers to Judah as the nation (הגוי) which would not listen to the voice of its god (7.28), and in 31.36 YHWH upholds the status of Israel as a nation for all time (גוי לפני כל הימים) so long as his statutes endure.³³⁶ Finally, in the 'cup of wrath' passage in 25.15–38, Judah and Jerusalem are included in the list of nations (גוים) commanded to drink from YHWH's cup (cf. 25.13).

In sum, the semantic range of the lexemes עַם and גוי in Jeremiah do not encourage a distinction between 'native' and 'foreign' in the phrase נביא לגוים. Thus, reading the phrase explicitly or implicitly as a reference to being a 'prophet to the *foreign* nations' does not match well with the meaning of the term in the book, or the semantic thrust of the collocation. It is more accurate, however, to view the term in Jer 1.5 as an indication of the function of Jeremiah's prophetic activity. The term stresses that he is to function as a נביא at the level of international affairs, so to speak, which will involve, by necessity, both domestic and foreign issues.

Further evidence for this view can be found in the elaboration of Jeremiah's commission in Jer 1.10. This verse concludes the text unit of 1.4–10 and revisits themes from 1.5 in a kind of inclusio. In 1.10 YHWH tells Jeremiah that he has appointed (פקד *hiphil*)³³⁷ him on this day 'against the nations' (על הגוים) and 'against the kingdoms' (על הממלכות). It is a little unclear how phrase 'on this day' (היום הזה) functions in 1.10; there is little evidence

³³⁴ For גוי with a possessive suffix, cf. Gen 10.5, 20, 31, 32; Ezek 36.13; Zeph 2.9; Ps 106.5.

³³⁵ This follows the positions of Michaud, *Vocation*, in: *Maqqél shâqêdh. La branche d'amanier*, Montpellier, 1960, 160–62; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 3. Auflage, HAT 12, Tübingen, 1968, 6.

³³⁶ Rudolph understands this as a promised political future; see Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 204. In contrast, see Weiser, *Jeremia* 25,15 - 52,34, 5. Auflage, ATD 21, Göttingen, 1969, 297.

³³⁷ Conrad translates הפקדתִיךְ in Jer 1.10 as 'made you governor' in view of the same word being used in relation to Gedaliah's appointment as governor by Nebuchadnezzar (Jer 40.5, 7, 11; 41.2, 10, 18). Conrad, *Fear Not Warrior*, BJS 75, Chico, CA, 1985, 50. This might be a bit of an over-interpretation of the term in the context of 1.10. See DCH VI 743–44.

of setting in the passage, so it likely acts rhetorically to bring focus to the act being performed. After this reference, a list of infinitive constructs supply a description of the activity Jeremiah is to perform in relation to the nations and kingdoms: לַנְתוּשׁ ('to uproot'), לַנְתוּץ ('to tear down'), לְהַאבִּיד ('to destroy'), לְהַרוֹס ('to overthrow'), לְבִנוֹת ('to build'), and לְנַטֵּעַ ('to plant'). These terms are attested across Jeremiah in a variety of contexts.³³⁸

Various lists and combinations of the terms in Jer 1.10 are scattered throughout the book and rarely are they combined in the same way (12.14–17; 18.7, 9; 24.6; 31.28, 38, 40; 42.10; 45.4). Of all these texts, only 1.10 uses a human subject for these verbs.³³⁹ One particularly important example is found in 18.7–10, where five of the verbs from 1.10 (לַנְתוּשׁ, לַנְתוּץ, לְהַאבִּיד, לְבִנוֹת, לְנַטֵּעַ) are used in a divine warning. YHWH says that though he might announce salvation or judgment against a nation (גוֹי) or kingdom (מַלְכָּמָה), that nation's ongoing behaviour could lead to him changing his mind. Thus, both YHWH's words of salvation and doom are conditional.³⁴⁰

The connection between nation (גוֹיִם) and kingdom (מַלְכָּמָה) is particularly stressed in Jer 1.10. And as the thematic motifs of 'building and planting' and 'uprooting and tearing down' show, the role of the נְבִיא is to go as commanded by YHWH (cf. 23.21, 32; 28.15; 43.2) and declare the divine message whether favourable or unfavourable (cf. 42.6, 9, 20).

2.3. Sending the prophets

As a part of the dialogue between YHWH and Jeremiah, Jer 1.6–9 reports a conventional exchange concerning Jeremiah's fitness for YHWH's commission. The soon-to-be prophet responds to YHWH's words in 1.5 with a twofold protest, introduced by the phrase אָהָה יְהוָה in 1.6a. This phrase appears elsewhere in the book in complaints against YHWH's judgment (4.10; 14.13; 32.17).³⁴¹ The complaint here has to do with Jeremiah's inability to perform the task of functioning as a נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם. His response hints at a basic under-

³³⁸ See Bach, *Bauen und Pflanzen*, in: *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, ed. Rendtorff and Koch, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1961, 7–32; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 238–39. Cf. Stipp, *Deuterojeremianische Konkordanz*, ATSAT 63, St. Ottilien, 1998, 96–97.

³³⁹ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 95; Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 137.

³⁴⁰ Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 516; Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 87–88.

³⁴¹ Vermeulen, *La rédaction de Jérémie* 1,4–19, 268.

standing of what the job involves; it is because he does not know how to speak (לֹא יָדַעְתִּי) (דָּבַר) that he protests YHWH's commission. The response is not too dissimilar to expressions typical in prayers, where the supplicant admits his or her weakness in an appeal for divine aid.³⁴² Jeremiah will require some help if he is to learn how to speak as a נָבִיא לַגּוֹיִם.

Jeremiah objects on the basis that he is a נָעַר. What does being a נָעַר have to do with being unable to speak? The lexeme נָעַר is generally refers to a person of a young age or a person of a particular social rank, which would be similar to a servant.³⁴³ Thus there are two primary explanations of how being a נָעַר might disqualify Jeremiah from being a נָבִיא and from knowing how to speak. First, since the lexeme נָעַר can refer to a person of young age, the thrust of Jeremiah's claim could be that his 'youth' is the reason for his inability to speak. However, when נָעַר is used as an indicator of age, it usually pertains to the status of an individual within a family structure as a dependent.³⁴⁴ Since the context of 1.4–10 is hardly domestic, it is difficult to accept that age is the deciding factor.

Second, if the lexeme נָעַר is taken with the sense of 'servant, attendant', Jeremiah's reason could boil down to a lack of experience, status or authority.³⁴⁵ Though it is a little generic, the term נָעַר can describes a person who functions as an attendant or servant for

³⁴² See also, for example, Gen 32.10–11; Num 11.14; 1 Kgs 3.7, 9; cf. Amos 7.2. See Miller, *Prayer as Persuasion*, *WW* 13 (1993), 359–60.

³⁴³ DCH V, 708; HALAT III, 668; DNWSI II, 739–40; Gesenius¹⁸, 827–28; DBHE, 501; BDB, 654–55; Stähli, *Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht*, BET 7, Frankfurt am Main, 1978, 77, esp. 120–29; Hamilton, נָעַר, NIDOTTE III (1996), 124–27. The related term נְעוּרִים ('youth') is attested in poetic judgments in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 2.2; 3.4; 3.24–25; 22.21; 31.19; 32.30; 48.11), but נָעַר only is found in 1.6–7 and in 51.22. In 51.22 it is set in opposition to זָקֵן (cf. Gen 19.4; Exod 10.9; Josh 6.21; Isa 20.4; Lam 2.21; Esth 3.13). Some help for understanding נָעַר comes from Ugaritic *n'r* (I) 'boy' and (II) 'lad, assistant, serving lad', where *n'r* (II) could be an occupational indicator. It appears in lists of professions such as KTU 9.436:2; cf. KTU 4.68:60; 4.126:12; 4.745:10; 4.367:7; 4.179:3. On translating נָעַר as 'squire', see Cutler and Macdonald, *Identification of the Na'ar*, *UF* 8 (1976), 27–35; Macdonald, *Status and Role of the Na'ar*, *JNES* 35 (1976), 147–70. At Ugarit, the term *n'r* also has military associations; see Cutler and Macdonald, *Unique Ugaritic Text UT 113*, *UF* 9 (1977), 13–30; Mayer and Mayer-Opficus, *Die Schlacht bei Qadeš*, *UF* 26 (1994), 354–59. Roshwalb, I think, goes a step too far in this direction by translating נָעַר as 'warrior', even though war is in my view an under-appreciated theme in Jer 1.4–19. See Roshwalb, *Jeremiah 1:4–10*, *JSOT* 34 (2010), 60–63.

³⁴⁴ נָעַר refers to unweaned or very recently weaned children in Exod 2.6; Judg 13.5, 7, 8, 12; 1 Sam 1.22–24; 4.21. Youths are also called נָעַר before reaching adulthood in Gen 21.12; 37.2; 2 Chr 34.3. Both Isaac and Abraham's attendants are referred to with נָעַר in Gen 22.3, 5, 12, 19. Stähli, *Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht*, 96–100. However Fox notes that נָעַר is sometimes a marker 'of a person's inexperience in a certain role rather than a mark of age or status.' An example is when Solomon refers to himself as a נָעַר קִטָּן when praying to YHWH for guidance in 1 Kgs 3.7. Fox, *In the Service of the King*, MHUC 23, Cincinnati, OH, 2000, 183–84. Cf. Stähli, *Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht*, 113–17.

³⁴⁵ Stähli, *Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht*, 96–100; Fox, *In the Service of the King*, 183. Cf. Selms, *Jeremia*, I, POuT, Nijkerk, 1972, 24–26.

someone of higher social rank, often royalty.³⁴⁶ For example, a נַעַר is involved in transmitting messages in 1 Sam 25.5–7.³⁴⁷

In sum, while נַעַר can refer to a person's social position in terms of age, i.e. 'youth', a reference to social rank, i.e. 'attendant', has a better sense in the context of Jer 1.6–9. The term should be understood as an indication that speaking as a נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם requires a person to be invested with a certain amount of authority—which, in this case, is answered by YHWH's instructions in 1.7–9. As such, it does not necessarily offer much insight regarding Jeremiah's age.³⁴⁸ Here the term is used as a conventional expression of inadequacy for a divinely appointed task.

In the following verses of Jer 1.7–9, YHWH counters Jeremiah's protest by reassuring him. Jeremiah is not to suppose that he cannot speak on YHWH's behalf. In the first part of YHWH's response, Jeremiah's words are repeated back to him; he is told not to say 'I am only an attendant' (אֵל תֹּאמַר נַעַר אֲנִי). YHWH rebuffs his protest by giving him a pair of instructions in 1.7b. Again, the objection Jeremiah gives to YHWH is merely conventional; it interrupts YHWH's commission only momentarily, and offers the deity a chance to express his support to Jeremiah.

The two instructions that YHWH gives Jeremiah in Jer 1.7 pertain to speaking as a נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם, and there is some similarity between these instructions and those generally given messengers in the ancient world.³⁴⁹ However, not too much should be made of the parallel to messenger speech. It should be noted that model has come under serious ques-

³⁴⁶ Fox determines that 'נַעַרִים/נַעֲרוֹת' should be classified as royal functionaries' in texts such as Exod 2.5; 2 Sam 13.17, 28–29; 2 Kgs 19.6; Esth 2.2; 4.4, 6; 6.3. See also Stähli, *Knabe–Jüngling–Knecht*, 183. Other non-royal persons are served by נַעַרִים/נַעֲרוֹת in similar roles as attendants; see Gen 22.3; 24.61; Exod 24.5; 33.11; Num 22.22; 1 Sam 9.27; 25.5, 42. Joseph is called a נַעַר whilst imprisoned before being summoned to interpret the Pharaoh's troubling dreams (Gen 41.12; cf. 41.46). Three other examples may have some significance for Jer 1.6: a נַעַר works in the service of a כֹּהֵן in 1 Sam 2.13, 15 (cf. Jeremiah's lineage of כֹּהֲנִים in Jer 1.1); Samuel's service to Eli as a נַעַר in 1 Sam 3.1, 8; and Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, is called a נַעַר in 2 Kgs 4.12 (cf. Jeremiah's role as נְבִיא in 1.5b).

³⁴⁷ Meier, *Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*, HSM 45, Atlanta, GA, 1988, 39.

³⁴⁸ See Leeb, *Away from the Father's House*, JSOTS 301, Sheffield, 2000. Cf. Strawn, Jeremiah's In/effective Plea, VT 55 (2005), 366–77.

³⁴⁹ Meier best summarises the instructions given to messengers in the ancient Semitic world: 'Direct address to the messenger often featured imperatives such as go (2 Sam 18; 2 Kgs 1; CTA 2.5; STT 28; EE; IE; Lúdingir-ra), run, set your face (CTA 2; 3.6; 4; 14; STT 28), speak (CTA 2; 3.6; 3.3; 4; 5; 6; 14; Atr.; ELA; CTH 7), say, tell, repeat, bring word, bow (CTA 2; 3.3; 3.6; 4; STT 28), rise, stand, and others, some of which attained a formulaic status. "Thus says PN" is characteristic of West Semitic literature (Gen 32; 1 Kgs 20; CTA 2; 3.3; 3.6; 4; 5; 14). Characteristic of Akkadian was the phrase "I will send you" (STT 28; EE; Harem laws; cf. Sud).' Meier, *Messenger in the Ancient Semitic World*, 36–57, esp. 57.

tion as an appropriate analogue in general for prophecy.³⁵⁰ The basic conceptual framework for prophetic activity in the context of 1.4–10 does not seem to depend on a messenger motif. Jeremiah's concern in 1.6 that he does not know how to speak implies a lack of *ability* not a lack of a *message*, and the elements of YHWH's commission all tend to stress the investiture of authority in an individual.

Jeremiah is given specific instructions in Jer 1.7b. YHWH tells him to go (הלך *qal*) where he is sent (שלח *qal*), and to speak (דבר *piel*) what he is commanded (צוה *piel*). The operative verbs in Jer 1.7, as already shown in the semantic analysis, have a close relationship to the discussion of prophecy and prophets in the book.

The two parallel lexemes צוה *piel* and שלח *qal* represent typical aspects of discussions concerning prophetic commission and authority.³⁵¹ There are 89 occurrences of the root שלח in the book of Jeremiah in various contexts.³⁵² YHWH is the most frequent subject of the verb,³⁵³ and often שלח is used in negative oracles to describe YHWH 'sending' judgment, either against Judah or against foreign nations.³⁵⁴ There are also more general references to individuals who are 'sent' for various reasons, usually as a form of communication or to perform a particular task.³⁵⁵ As seen in the semantic analysis, the most fre-

³⁵⁰ One example that is sufficient for the present context is how the so-called *Botenformel* 'thus DN has said' has been interpreted to support this view. See esp. Westermann, *Grundformen prophetischer Rede*, 70–91. Meier has shown quite convincingly that the so-called 'messenger formulae' do not provide direct evidence for the prophet-as-messenger analogy. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 277–91. He rightly notes that '[t]he question of the messenger status of the classical prophets is an issue that is much larger than the significance of the single phrase כה אמר יהוה. However, this phrase is a major support for that perception.' Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 288. Cf. Wagner, *Prophetie als Theologie*, FRLANT 207, Göttingen, 2004.

³⁵¹ Other terms which are used in reference to the commissioning of a נביא are קרא ('call') or קום *hiphil* ('raise up') as in Jer 29.15; cf. 28.6.

³⁵² Jer 1.7, 9; 2.10; 3.1, 8; 7.25(x2); 8.17; 9.15, 16; 14.3, 14, 15; 15.1; 16.16; 17.8; 19.14; 21.1; 23.21, 32, 38; 24.5, 10; 25.4, 9, 15, 16, 17, 27; 26.5, 12, 15, 22; 27.3, 15; 28.9, 15, 16; 29.1, 3, 9, 17, 19, 20, 25, 28, 31; 34.9, 10, 11, 14, 16; 35.15; 36.14, 21; 37.3, 7, 17; 38.6, 11, 14; 39.13, 14; 40.1, 5, 14; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2, 10; 44.4; 48.12; 49.14, 37; 50.33; 51.2. Of this total, 53 occurrences are *qal* form: Jer 1.7, 9; 2.10; 7.25; 9.16; 14.3, 14, 15; 16.16(x2) 19.14; 21.1; 23.21, 32; 25.4, 15, 16, 17, 27; 26.5, 12, 15, 22; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.1, 3, 9, 19, 25, 31; 35.15; 36.14, 21; 37.3, 7, 17; 38.14; 39.13, 14; 40.14; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2, 10; 44.4, 20; 49.14. The remaining 36 are *piel* form: Jer 3.1, 8; 8.17; 9.15; 15.1; 17.8; 24.5, 10; 27.3; 28.16; 29.17, 20; 34.9, 10(x2), 11, 14(x2), 16; 38.6, 11; 40.1, 5; 48.12; 49.37; 50.33; 51.2.

³⁵³ Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 16.16; 19.14; 23.21, 32, 38; 25.4, 9, 15, 17; 26.5, 12, 15; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19, 31; 35.15; 42.5, 21; 43.1, 2, 10; 44.4.

³⁵⁴ YHWH sends (שלח *qal*) a form of judgment in Jer 8.17; 9.15; 16.16; 24.10; 25.9, 16, 27; 29.17; 43.10; 48.12; 49.37; 51.2.

³⁵⁵ Individuals who are described as 'sent' in the book are Elasah (Jer 29.3), Elnathan (26.22), Gemariah (29.3), Hananiah (28.15), Ishmael (40.14), Jehucal (37.3), Jehudi (36.14, 21), Jeremiah (1.7; 19.14; 25.15, 17; 26.12, 15; 37.7; 42.5, 6, 9, 20, 21; 43.1, 2), Nebuchadnezzar (25.9; 43.10), Pashhur (21.1), Shemaiah (29.31), and Zephaniah (21.1; 37.3). YHWH is said to have sent 'my servants the prophets' (עבדי הנביאים) in multiple texts (7.25;

quent use of the lexeme takes נביא as its subject, and these instances are a key component of the discussion of prophecy and prophets in the book.³⁵⁶

The verb צוה, with 39 occurrences in Jeremiah,³⁵⁷ is also typical for contexts related to prophetic authority and commission.³⁵⁸ In Jer 14.14, a negative oracle criticises prophets who were not commanded (צוה) to speak, yet they did anyway, and in 26.8 a positive appraisal of Jeremiah's actions in the temple claims that he spoke as he was commanded (צוה) by YHWH. In the majority of cases YHWH is the subject of the verb,³⁵⁹ though Jeremiah also issues commands to other individuals as well (27.4; 32.13; 36.5, 8; 51.59).

After instructing Jeremiah to go where he is sent and speak what he is commanded, YHWH reassures him against any resistance with the formulaic expression 'fear not' (אל תירא) in Jer 1.8. This statement appears as a part of YHWH's expression of support for Jeremiah, and it should be understood in connection to the similar expression 'gird up your loins' (תאזר מתניך) in 1.17. Both idioms pertain to preparations for conflict, war or strife; as reassurances given to Jeremiah, they seem to presume that he will encounter strife in his prophetic activity.³⁶⁰

One of the ongoing points of discussion in current definitions of prophecy in contemporary scholarship is the notion of a *Sendungsbewusstsein* among ancient prophetic figures.³⁶¹ There is still debate regarding whether or not this is a part of the biblical construct of prophecy or an historical aspect of ancient Near Eastern prophetic activity. It is apparent that many texts in the Hebrew Bible use the motif of 'being sent' by YHWH with

25.4; 26.5; 29.19; 35.15; 44.4). Other figures who are sent are: צעיר (14.3), ציר (49.14) and חכמות (9.16).

³⁵⁶ Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 23.21, 32; 25.4; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19; 35.15; 37.3, 7, 17; 38.14; 42.5; 44.4. See my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

³⁵⁷ Jer 1.7, 17; 7.22, 23(x2), 31; 11.4(x2), 8; 13.5, 6; 14.14; 17.22; 19.5; 23.32; 26.2, 8; 29.23; 32.13, 23, 35; 34.22; 35.6, 8, 10, 14, 16, 18, 27; 36.5, 8, 26; 37.21; 38.10; 39.11; 47.7; 50.21; 51.59.

³⁵⁸ Jer 1.7; 14.14; 23.32; 32.35. Again, see my comments in part I, chapter 2, section 1.2.3, page 52.

³⁵⁹ Jer 1.7, 17; 7.22, 23, 31; 11.4, 8; 13.5, 6; 14.14; 17.22; 19.5; 23.32; 26.2, 8; 29.23; 32.35; 34.22; 47.7; 50.21.

³⁶⁰ More is said about Jer 1.8 in this chapter, section 3.4, page 96.

³⁶¹ See Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 221-24. The closest 'consensus' definition of prophecy includes this notion: '(a) in einem kognitiven Erlebnis (Vision, Audition, audiovisuelle Erscheinung, Traum o.ä.) der Offenbarung einer Gottheit oder mehrerer Gottheiten teilhaftig wird, und ferner (b) sich durch die betreffende(n) Gottheit(en) beauftragt weiß, das ihr Geoffenbarte in sprachlicher Fassung (als "P.", "Prophetenspruch") oder in averbalen Kommunikationsakten ("symbolischen" oder "Zeichenhandlungen") an einen Dritten (oder Dritte), den (die) eigentlichen Adressaten, weiterzuleiten.' Weippert, *Prophetie im Alten Orient*, NBL III, 197. See also Weippert, *Aspekte israelitischer Prophetie*, in: *Ad bene et fideliter seminandum*, ed. Mauer and Magen, AOAT 220, Kevelaer/Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988, 289-90.

שלח *gal* in reference to a variety of important figures, including prophets; it is important to note that the idea is not restricted to a particularly ‘prophetic’ use.³⁶²

In discussions of a particularly prophetic *Sendungsbewusstsein*, several texts from Mari are often adduced as evidence of the significance of the concept in the ancient Near Eastern prophetic phenomenon. Six texts from Mari share the motif of a figure involved in intuitive divination being ‘sent’ by a deity.³⁶³ This has led some to conclude that the motif is operative in a very similar fashion in both the Hebrew Bible and the Mari texts, and therefore more likely to be a significant aspect of the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy overall.³⁶⁴

It is important to stress that, due to the nature of the sources, we simply cannot know definitively whether or not a prophetic figure, in Jerusalem or Mari, regarded himself or herself as ‘sent’ by a deity.³⁶⁵ However, it is clear that the concept of ‘being sent’ was significant for discussions about prophecy and prophets. In this respect it is worth mentioning some correlations between the texts from Mari and Jeremiah. A prophetic oracle in ARM 26/1 210 begins with the statement ‘Dagan m’a envoyée’, thus identifying the divine origin of the oracle.³⁶⁶ In ARM 26/1 212 the claim made in the text is that the message was sent by the deity, not that the *assinnu* was sent.³⁶⁷ Two of the claims of ‘being sent’ are made by the same figure, which could be understood as ‘the idiosyncrasy of one *muhhum*’

³⁶² See, e.g., Exod 3.14, 15; 4.13, 28; 5.22; 7.16; Num 16.28, 29; Deut 34.11; Josh 24.5; Jdg 6.8; 1 Sam 12.8; 15.1; 16.1; 2 Sam 12.1; 24.13; 2 Kgs 2.2, 4, 6; Isa 42.19; 48.16; 61.1; Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 19.14; 23.21, 32, 38; 25.4, 15, 17; 26.5, 12, 15; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19, 31; 35.15; 42.5, 21; 43.1, 2; 44.4; Ezek 2.3, 4; 3.6; 13.6; Mic 6.4; Hag 1.12; Zech 2.12, 13, 15; 4.9; 6.15; Mal 3.1, 23; Ps 105.26; Neh 6.12; 2 Chr 24.19; 25.15; 36.15. Richter, *Die sogenannten vorprophetischen Berufsberichte*, 156–58. See also Delcor and Jenni, שלח, THAT II (1976), 913–14.

³⁶³ Four of these texts refer to prophets: A.3217 = ARM X 6 = ARM 26/1 212; A.4865 = ARM II 90 = ARM 26/1 220; A.2030 = ARM III 40 = ARM 26/1 221; M.13843 = ARM XIII 114 = ARM 26/1 210. Two of the texts are dream reports: A.15 = ARM 26/1 233; A.3424 = ARM 26/1 240. These references are drawn from Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 56; Roberts, *Mari Prophetic Texts*, in: *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Winona Lake, IN, 2002, 157–253.

³⁶⁴ Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*, 380; Durand, La religion en Siria, in: *Mitología y religión del Oriente Antiguo*, ed. Mander and Olmo Lete, Colección. Estudios orientales 8, Sabadell, 1995, 317. Cited in Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 92.

³⁶⁵ Discussions regarding ‘prophetic psychology’ are particularly vulnerable to excess speculation, and one must take great methodological care in approaching the topic. See Joyce, *Prophets and Psychological Interpretation*, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day, LHBOTS 531, London, 2010, 117–32.

³⁶⁶ Transliteration and translation of all the following texts from Mari are found in Durand, *Archives épistolaires de Mari*. I have also consulted the English translations found in Roberts, *Mari Prophetic Texts*; Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy*; Heimpel, *Letters to the King of Mari*, MC 12, Winona Lake, IN, 2003.

³⁶⁷ Cf. Jer 23.38; 42.5; 43.1.

(ARM 26/1 220; 221), though the presence of the motif is clearly attested in both texts.³⁶⁸ The ‘sending’ motif also appears in the dream texts ARM 26/1 233 and ARM 26/1 240; a similar connection between prophetic dreams and ‘being sent’ is Jer 23.25–32.

Because of the nature of the present work, conclusions drawn from comparative evidence must be circumspect and cautious. The significance of the examples mentioned above primarily indicate that the concept of ‘being sent’ was common to some discussions of prophecy in the ancient Near East.³⁶⁹ Thus the idea of ‘being sent’ as a known aspect of the prophetic phenomenon in the ancient world matches well with the descriptions in Jeremiah.

2.4. Prophet like Moses

Following YHWH’s reassurance to Jeremiah in Jer 1.8, the text describes YHWH reaching out his hand and touching Jeremiah’s lips (וישלח יהוה את ידו ויגע על פי). As YHWH does this, he says that he has placed his words in Jeremiah’s mouth. The effect is essentially to authorise Jeremiah as a fully legitimate YHWH-prophet.

There is little evidence of setting for the act in Jer 1.9, and not much can be said about this event or experience. Could it be a vision, or a part of the ‘inner experience’ of the prophet, or a sign of a formal ritual?³⁷⁰ Answers are not forthcoming, but there are other texts in Jeremiah which make similar claims (see 5.14). Rather than try to get ‘behind’ the description—that is, speculate on the kind of experience it may represent—I prefer to understand it as making a claim. The ‘sign’ found in 1.9 is a metaphorical description of the main theme of the passage, which is namely to legitimate Jeremiah as YHWH’s prophet.

Along with Jer 1.7b and 1.17a, YHWH’s act in 1.9 is commonly associated with a motif where prophets are compared to or associated with Moses.³⁷¹ There is a near *communio*

³⁶⁸ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 222.

³⁶⁹ On the significance these common conceptions, particularly in reference to Mari, see, e.g., Barstad, Mari and the Hebrew Bible, *SEÅ* 70 (2005), 21–32; Barstad, Sic dicit dominus, in: *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context*, ed. Amit, Ben Zvi, Finkelstein, and Lipschits, Winona Lake, IN, 2006, 21–52.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 53.

³⁷¹ It is commonly thought that these texts display a strong deuteronomistic influence and are a part of late deuteronomistic redactions of the book. Many commentators have noted the close linguistic similarity between Jer 1.7b, 9b, 17a and Deut 18.18, a similarity often considered ‘too much of a coincidence’ to preclude some literary connection between the two texts. Achenbach, “Prophet like Moses”, in: *The Pentateuch*, ed. Dozeman, Schmid, and Schwartz, FAT 78, Tübingen, 2011, 446; Römer, Comment distinguer ?, in: *Comment*

opinionis which holds that Jer 1.7b, 9 are dependent on Deut 18.18 and that Jeremiah is being presented in 1.4–19 as a ‘prophet like Moses’.³⁷² For the present context, I will focus strictly on the shared language in Deut 18.18 and Jer 1.7, 9.³⁷³

In Jer 1.7b, YHWH instructs Jeremiah to speak everything he is commanded, using the phrase **וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה תְּדַבֵּר**. In Deut 18.18, the phrase which describes the prophet ‘like you’ (**כַּמֹּדִי**) is similar, as YHWH says he will speak to the people of Israel all that he is commanded (**וְדִבַּר אֲלֵיהֶם אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה**). There is clearly similar language in these texts, and variance in person and number are attributable to context.³⁷⁴ Where Jeremiah tends to combine the verbs **שָׁלַח** *qal* and **צִוָּה** *piel*, in Deuteronomy the verb **קִוִּים** *hiphil* expresses the idea of commission in 18.18 (cf. Jer 29.15; 28.6).

Further similarities are found in Jer 1.9b and Deut 18.18b. The phrase **הֵנָּה נֹתַתִּי דְּבָרִי** describes YHWH placing his words in the prophet’s mouth in Jer 1.9 (cf. 5.14).³⁷⁵ In Deut 18.18b, the phrase **וְנֹתַתִּי דְּבָרִי בְּפִי** describes a similar idea. While these two texts both use the verb **נָתַן** *qal*, other texts have nearly identical phrasing (cf. **נֹתַתִּי דְּבָרִי בְּפִי** in Isa

devient-on prophète ?, ed. Durand, Römer, and Bürki, OBO 265, Fribourg/Göttingen, 2014, 117.

³⁷² One of the foremost exponents of the view that Jeremiah is being cast as a ‘prophet like Moses’ is Römer, who has articulated his views on the relationship between Jer 1 and Deut 18 in numerous publications. For example, see Römer, Formation of the Book of Jeremiah, in: *The Production of Prophecy*, ed. Edelman and Ben Zvi, Bible World, London, 2003, 168–83; Römer, Von maulwürfen und verhinderten Propheten, CV 51 (2009), 173–83; Römer, Moses, Israel’s First Prophet, in: *Israelite Prophecy and the Deuteronomistic History*, ed. Jacobs and Person, AIL 14, Atlanta, GA, 2013, 129–45. See also Broughton, Call of Jeremiah, ABR 6 (1958), 39–46; Thiel, Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25, 62–72; Vermeylen, La rédaction de Jérémie 1,4–19, 268; Seitz, Prophet Moses, ZAW 101 (1989), 3–27; Köckert, Zum literargeschichtlichen Ort des Prophetengesetzes, in: *Liebe und Gebot*, ed. Kratz and Spieckermann, FRLANT 190, Göttingen, 2000, 80–100; Grätz, »Einen Propheten wie mich«; Otto, Jeremiah und die Tora, in: *Die Tora. Studien zum Pentateuch*, ed. Otto, BZABR 9, Wiesbaden, 2009, 518–26. Some notable recent objectors to this view are Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, ATD 20, Göttingen, 2008, 47–48; Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9–22, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day, LHBOTS 531, London, 2010, 151–71. Fischer views Jer 1 as a polemic against the uniqueness of Moses as an intercessor described in Deut 34.10. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 136. On the ‘prophet like Moses’ motif in other prophetic ‘biographies’, see Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 91; McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 25; Schmid, *Buchgestalten des Jeremiabuches*, WMANT 72, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1996, 219; Dijkstra, “I am neither a prophet nor a prophet’s pupil”, in: *The Elusive Prophet*, ed. Moor, OTS 45, Leiden, 2001, 119–28.

³⁷³ Cf. the phrase **וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה** in Exod 7.2. Schmidt, Jeremias Berufung, in: *Biblische Welten*, ed. Zwickel, OBO 123, Freiburg/Göttingen, 1993, 185.

³⁷⁴ Achenbach is not too bothered with these differences in Jeremiah and Deuteronomy. Achenbach, “Prophet like Moses”, 447.

³⁷⁵ See also the similar descriptions found in some of the ‘confessions’ of Jeremiah (Jer 15.16; 17.15; 20.8–9). Nicholson, Deuteronomy 18:9–22, 155.

6.7),³⁷⁶ and other descriptions of the same idea use the semantically overlapping verb שִׁים *qal* (Num 22.38; 23.5, 12; Isa 51.16; 59.21).³⁷⁷

In my view, the phrases and descriptions of prophetic activity in Jer 1.4–10 are more integrally related to the language found throughout Jeremiah than to that of Deut 18.18. Jeremiah is ‘sent’ (שָׁלַח) rather than ‘raised up’ (קוּם), which fits the ancient Near Eastern pattern. As McKane, Schmidt and Nicholson have observed, the same description of YHWH putting words in the mouth of a prophet is found in Jer 5.14; it is therefore not *necessarily* the case that this language comes from Deuteronomy.³⁷⁸ In fact, some argue that the dependence might go the other direction.³⁷⁹ The language in the texts from Jeremiah and Deuteronomy are shaped by particular necessities of context, and some of it is much more widespread than just these two instances. It is preferable to me, therefore, to interpret the claims of Jer 1.7, 9 in light of similar language in Jeremiah than in light of Deut 18.18.

2.5. Summary

In Jer 1.4–10, YHWH’s reassuring statements to Jeremiah culminate in YHWH appointing him as a prophet to the nations (נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם). YHWH expresses his support to Jeremiah by describing how it preceded his birth, which is a common cultural motif. These statements tend to reflect concerns of legitimacy and authority in the face of opposition or rival claims (cf. 1.8, 17–19).³⁸⁰ One might see this used as an example of the spirituality of the prophet; for example, when Aeschmann invokes ‘le grand mystère ... de la prédestination’ or Fischer claims that it shows the special relationship between YHWH and Jeremiah, ‘emotional und persönlich’ eng zusammen, they appear to miss the issue of legitimation.³⁸¹ At the heart of 1.5 is a claim to authorise Jeremiah as a YHWH-prophet.

³⁷⁶ Köckert, Zum literargeschichtlichen Ort des Prophetengesetzes, 86–87.

³⁷⁷ See Thiel, *Deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25*, 67–68; Otto, *Jeremia und die Tora*, 519. Both hold that this language is derived from a deuteronomistic redaction.

³⁷⁸ McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 13; Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 47–48; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*, 154–55.

³⁷⁹ Schmidt, *Das Prophetengesetz*, in: *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature*, ed. Vervenne and Lust, ETL 133, Leuven, 1997, 55–69; Köckert, *Zum literargeschichtlichen Ort des Prophetengesetzes*; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*.

³⁸⁰ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 129–35.

³⁸¹ Aeschmann, *Jérémie*, 44–45; Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 143. Similarly, cf. Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 70; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 45–46.

To be a נביא לגוים does not imply prophesying *only* about certain issues or in regard to certain groups. In addition, the semantic range of גוי in Jeremiah does not encourage a distinction between ‘native’ and ‘foreign’ in the phrase נביא לגוים. What the phrase does indicate is a certain *function*. Jeremiah is to perform as a נביא at the level of international affairs, which always involves domestic affairs in turn; while a unique phrase, this is still a typical description of prophecy.³⁸² And as the thematic motifs of ‘building and planting’ and ‘uprooting and tearing down’ show in 1.10, both favourable and unfavourable words will be necessary for this function. Together the commission to a נביא לגוים in 1.5 and the tasks of ‘uprooting’ and ‘planting’ do not encourage a distinction between ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ as distinct types of prophecy.³⁸³

Jeremiah’s protest against his commission follows conventional patterns, and it expresses a feeling of inadequate authority for the role of נביא. His ‘youth’ is a deficit of rank and authority, not of age; thus ‘biographical’ readings of Jer 1.4–10 miss this crucial point.³⁸⁴ This is why YHWH instructs Jeremiah in 1.7–9. ‘Being sent’ and ‘being commanded’ are the conceptual spheres which relate to prophetic authority.

Many of the concepts found in Jer 1.4–10 are common to the ancient Near East, and are also found throughout the book of Jeremiah. In my view, then, it is not necessary to explain them in 1.4–10 in terms of their connection to Deuteronomy.³⁸⁵ The language in which Jeremiah is allegedly cast as a ‘prophet like Moses’ is not as close a match as is often thought.³⁸⁶ The contextual concerns in these two texts are rather different. It is necessary, however, to understand the descriptions of prophetic activity in 1.4–10 as integrally related to the language found throughout Jeremiah.

3. Jeremiah 1.11–14

A close connection between the two visions in Jer 1.11–14 is supported by both literary and thematic considerations. Formal characteristics are shared between them, such as a ques-

³⁸² Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 54–55.

³⁸³ So also Jong, *Fallacy of “True and False”*, 29. Cf. Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*; Wolff, *Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie*, 465; Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias*, 120–21.

³⁸⁴ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 34–35.

³⁸⁵ I agree with Schmitt that legitimacy is one of the critical aspects of the passage, but disagree with the view that it must derive from deuteronomistic perspectives. Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 165. Cf. Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 63.

³⁸⁶ In support, see Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 47–48; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*, 154–55.

tion-and-answer format, as well as repeated phrases and clichés. Both texts describe Jeremiah being asked what he sees (מה אתה ראה), and both times Jeremiah responds 'I see ...' (Jer 1.11, 13). The message of the first vision in 1.11–12 is concerned with YHWH's intent to act and the second vision in 1.13–14 is an elaboration of judgment which describes imminent threat for Judah.

Literarily the two visions are quite similar as they follow a question-and-answer pattern using the same phrases and terms.³⁸⁷ There is a repetition of the phrase מה אתה ראה in 1.11, 13 and both times Jeremiah responds (ואמר) to YHWH's question by describing what he sees with the phrase אני ראה (cf. 24.3). YHWH's speech is introduced twice with ויאמר יהוה אלי in 1.12, 14. This might explain part of the development of the text of 1.4–19 but it does not explain other internal consistencies shared by 1.4–10 and 1.11–14, such as the use of the first-person in the introductory phrase ויהי דבר יהוה אלי לאמר in 1.4, 11, 13 and the interest in the דבר יהוה in 1.9, 12.³⁸⁸ It is also possible that a wordplay between the lexemes ירא and ראה links the two sections, as YHWH's instruction to Jeremiah אל תירא in 1.8 is followed by the question מה אתה ראה in 1.11, 13 (cf. Ps 40.4; 119.74; Jb 6.21).³⁸⁹

3.1. Text and translation

- | | | |
|--|--|------|
| | ויהי דבר יהוה אלי לאמר מה אתה ראה ויאמר מקל שקד אני ראה | (11) |
| | ויאמר יהוה אלי היטבת לראות כי שקד אני על דברי לעשותו | (12) |
| | ויהי דבר יהוה אלי שנית לאמר מה אתה ראה ויאמר סיר נפוח אני ראה ופניו מפני צפונה | (13) |
| | ויאמר יהוה אלי מצפון תפתח הרעה על כל יושבי הארץ | (14) |
-
- | | |
|------|---|
| (11) | There was a word of YHWH to me, saying, What do you see, Jeremiah?
And I said, I see an almond branch. |
| (12) | And YHWH said to me, Well seen, for I am watchful to act upon my word. |
| (13) | There was a word of YHWH to me a second time, saying, What do you see?
And I said, I see a steaming pot, facing away from the north. |
| (14) | And YHWH said to me, Out of the north disaster will be opened upon all
the inhabitants of the land. |

³⁸⁷ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, AOAT 292, Münster, 2002, 110; Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 58.

³⁸⁸ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 25.

³⁸⁹ On the wordplay, see Barr, *Comparative Philology*, 153–54.

3.2. The first vision: Jeremiah 1.11–12

In the first vision report (Jer 1.11–12), Jeremiah sees an almond branch (מקל שקד), and YHWH says he is watchful (שקד) to act upon his word. The vision and the interpretation hinge on a word-play between שֶׁקֶד ('almond') in 1.11 and שֶׁקֶד ('watch') in 1.12. YHWH's 'watchfulness' is usually related to judgment in Jeremiah (5.6; 44.27), but can also be used in a salvific context as well (31.28). There is no indication in 1.11–12 whether YHWH is keen to act in judgment or salvation. However, the premise of the vision seems to focus on the relation between YHWH's word and YHWH's action.

The peculiar phrase מקל שקד ('almond rod') in Jer 1.11 is unique. The lexeme מקל ('rod') is used to describe a shepherd's staff (Gen 30.37; 1 Sam 17.40, 43), or a ruler's sceptre (Jer 48.17), and can also describe a weapon (Ezek 39.9) or an instrument used in rhabdomancy.³⁹⁰ The most common and well-known motif which uses a מקל or a מטה is that of a staff or rod as a symbol of authority carried by powerful figures such as Moses (e.g. Exod 4.2, 17, 20; 7.17; 17.19), Aaron (e.g. Exod 7.19–20; 8.1, 12) and Elijah (described as a משענת in 2 Kgs 4.29, 31).³⁹¹ If מקל is to be understood as a 'rod' then it has a connotation of authority, power or legitimacy.³⁹²

What then is the significance of the rod being related to almond? One view relates the nominal form שֶׁקֶד to the lexeme שקד ('watch, wake') due to the early seasonal bloom of almond trees; the *amygdalus communis*, or almond, is referred to by the term שקד because it is 'wakeful' in the spring.³⁹³ Thus in this reading the 'watchful' early bloom of the almond is likened to YHWH being 'watchful' to act imminently. Though poetic, this view can be improved with a closer look at the lexeme מקל.

³⁹⁰ DCH V, 466–67; HALOT I, 627; Gesenius¹⁷, 456; Gesenius¹⁸, 730. See André, מקל, ThWAT IV (1984), 1129–31.

³⁹¹ HALOT I, 627. Cf. the parallelism of מטה עז ('rod of strength') and תפארה מקל ('staff of office') in Jer 48.17.

³⁹² Beuken, מקל, in: בלי Database: Utensils in the Hebrew Bible, ed. Moor, in cooperation with B. E. J. H. Becking and M. Korpel. Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelshap in Nederland en België, <http://www.otw-site.eu/KLY/kly.php>, 2010–14.

³⁹³ E.g., BDB, 1052. 'Weil der Mandelbaum gar nicht zu schlafen scheint, eignet er sich zu diesem Bilde.' Dalman I/1, 255–56. Cf. Wood, Jeremiah's Figure of the Almond Rod, *JBL* 61 (1942), 99–103; Sauer, Mandelzweig und Kessel, *ZAW* 78 (1966), 56–61. See also Jacob and Jacob, Flora, ABD II (1992), 806. Cf. HALOT I, 522 and the lexeme לז.

Various staffs and rods have been suggested as possible referents for the מקל שקד in Jer 1.11. Aaron's staff (מטה) appears similar, as it blossomed and bore almonds (יגמל) in Num 17.16–26 (cf. Gen 30.37–41). The מקל שקד might refer to a particular cultic instrument in the Jerusalem temple; perhaps it is a priestly staff used in cultic contexts as a signifier of authority or power.³⁹⁴ If an object like this is in view in 1.11–12, then it is possible that the מקל שקד has a divinatory role or significance which legitimates the one in possession of it (cf. Gen 30.37–43; Hos 4.12).³⁹⁵ Thus YHWH being 'watchful' to act is connected to an image of authority; the cultic rod becomes a symbol of the efficacy of YHWH's word.

However the phrase מקל שקד is interpreted, the implication of the vision is that YHWH acts upon his word. The vision's function is related to the overall pattern in 1.4–19; it legitimises Jeremiah and confirms YHWH's support for his prophetic activity. YHWH tells Jeremiah he has seen rightly (היטבת לראות) in 1.12, and declares that the 'word' YHWH gives to him will be acted upon. Importantly, this is not a general 'theology' of YHWH's word. The phrase דבר יהוה and the concept of YHWH's word is often made into a theological concept.³⁹⁶ In context, however, YHWH's word is in Jeremiah's mouth, which means he is authorised to speak on YHWH's behalf.³⁹⁷

3.3. The second vision: Jeremiah 1.13–14

Both of the vision reports in Jer 1.11–12 and 1.13–14 are introduced by the phrase ויהי דבר, which also introduces 1.4–10. A connection between the two visions is sug-

³⁹⁴ Toorn, Did Jeremiah See Aaron's Staff?, *JSOT* 43 (1989), 83–94. So also Wood, Jeremiah's Figure of the Almond Rod; Williams, Jeremiah's Vision of the Almond Rod, in: *A Stubborn Faith*, ed. Hobbs, Dallas, 1956, 90–99.

³⁹⁵ DCH notes the sense מקל II 'perh. penis,* in supposed divination*' (cf. Hos 4.12–15). While a 'suggestive' option, in my view it is not very persuasive. See, e.g. Day, Does the Old Testament Refer to Sacred Prostitution?, in: *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays*, ed. McCarthy and Healey, JSOTS 375, London, 2004, 225–50; Day, Hosea and the Baal Cult, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel*, LHBOTS 531, London, 2010, 214–15.

³⁹⁶ See, e.g., Neher, *L'essence du prophétisme*, 105–15; Dahood, Minor Prophets and Ebla, in: *The Word of the Lord Shall Go Forth*, ed. Meyers and O'Connor, ASOR Special Volume Series 1, Winona Lake, IN, 1983, 51–52; Fretheim, Word of God, ABD VI (1992), 961–68; Levin, Das Wort Jahwes an Jeremia, 278–80; Holt, Den ensomme profet, in: *Historie og konstruktion*, ed. Müller and Thompson, FBE 14, København, 2005, 197–98; Holt, Word of Jeremiah—Word of God, in: *Uprooting and Planting*, ed. Goldingay, LHBOTS 459, London, 2007, 172–89; Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 265–90, cit. 266.

³⁹⁷ Meier, in a welcome contrast, cautions against 'expansive generalizations'; he shows convincingly that the 'word of PN' pattern 'simply reflects the language of an authoritative individual'. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 314–19.

gested by the statement in 1.13 that a message from YHWH came to Jeremiah a second time (שנית). It appears that there is a stronger textual connection between 1.11–12 and 1.13–14 than there is between 1.4–10 and 1.11–14; since both 1.4 and 1.11 report a word from YHWH, 1.13 is actually the third time that YHWH's word comes to Jeremiah in the text.³⁹⁸

The second vision in Jer 1.13–14 hinges on an image of judgment, the description of which in 1.13 is somewhat difficult. After being asked by YHWH what he sees (מה אתה ראה) in 1.13, Jeremiah responds that he sees a 'steaming pot' (סיר נפוח) and in describing it he says it is 'facing away from the north' (ופניו מפני צפונה). Each of these phrases must be addressed in turn in order to make sense of the image.

The main image described in Jer 1.13 is a 'boiling pot' (סיר נפוח). The lexeme סיר I refers to a large, earthenware or metal, wide-necked cooking pot or cauldron often used for boiling meat (e.g. Exod 16.3; 2 Kgs 4.38–41; Ezek 24.11).³⁹⁹ The modifier, a passive participle from נפח *qal*, is typically understood to be a reference to steam, rising from hot or boiling water.⁴⁰⁰ The image, then, is of a large pot filled with liquid, placed over a fire, and steaming over.⁴⁰¹

The second half of the vision description notes the direction of the steaming pot, facing away from the north (ופניו מפני צפונה). The construction is somewhat awkward: ופניו מפני is, very literally, 'and its face from the face' which is then combined with the lexeme צפון with a locative ה. The main thrust is a description the surface rim of the pot as faced away from the north.⁴⁰² Thus the image is of a cauldron filled with boiling liquid and

³⁹⁸ This incongruity may suggest that 1.4–10 and 1.11–14 were separate texts later joined together, a position which is widely held. See Renaud, Jér 1, in: *Le Livre de Jérémie*, ed. Bogaert, BETL 54, Louvain, 1981, 182; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 16–17; Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 42–43; Römer, *Du livre au prophète*, 260–70.

³⁹⁹ Dalman I/1, 137; Honeyman, *māgôr mis-sābīb*, VT 4 (1954), 85; Killebrew, Late Bronze and Iron I Cooking Pots in Canaan, in: *Archaeology, History and Culture in Palestine and the Near East*, ed. Kapitan, ASOR Books 3, Atlanta, GA, 1999, 109. Köhler's suggestion that סיר should be emended to כור 'smelting furnace' is noted in KBL, 656; HALAT III, 710 = HALOT I, 467. Köhler, *Kleine Lichte*, Zwingli-Bücherei 47, Zürich, 1945, 44.

⁴⁰⁰ DCH V, 714; HALOT I, 708. A similar use of the *qal* passive participle נִפְּחָה is found in Jb 41.12 where YHWH describes the בהמות with smoke coming from his nostrils ואגמן כדור נפוח ואגמן ('like a glowing, boiling cauldron'). This reads אגמן ('reeds') with the conjectured אגם I 'be hot'; cf. KBL, 9; HALOT I, 10; Gesenius¹⁸, 12.

⁴⁰¹ Gesenius¹⁸, 884.

⁴⁰² GKC §90e. Driver suggested emending פניו to the *qal* passive participle פָּנוּ ('turned'). Driver, *Linguistic and Textual Problems*, JQR 28 (1937), 97.

facing away from the north, which YHWH tells Jeremiah is a premonition of judgment against Judah.

This image is interpreted by YHWH in 1.14 as a reference to a coming catastrophe (מצפון תפתח הרעה). The particular phrasing, where רעה is 'opened' (פתח *niphal*) is unusual, but the sense is clear: the image portends a disaster which will come upon all those who dwell in the land (על כל ישבי הארץ).⁴⁰³ The theme of 'disaster from the north' and an 'enemy from the north' is found in a number of texts in Jeremiah.⁴⁰⁴ Attempts to identify this enemy are quixotic, and have largely been abandoned in contemporary scholarship.⁴⁰⁵

For some time it has been recognised that there are texts in the Hebrew Bible in which צפון cannot mean 'north' (e.g. Job 26.7).⁴⁰⁶ In light of the texts from Ras-Shamra, it has become clear that the term צפון can have a 'mythic' connotation in ancient West Semitic religious thought. The Ugaritic lexeme *špn* refers to Mons Cassius, modern day Jebel el-Aqra', which was understood as the mythological dwelling place of Ba'al.⁴⁰⁷ This has provided an analogue for the similar conceptual understanding of Mount Zion (הר ציון) as the 'summit of Zaphon' (ירכת' צפון), the residence of YHWH in Jerusalem, as found in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ps 48.3). These motifs leave open the possibility that צפון can have a mythological sense which refers to YHWH's dwelling place. If this reading is

⁴⁰³ Driver, *Linguistic and Textual Problems*, 98. Cf. Ehrlich, *Jeremia*, Leipzig, 1912, 234.

⁴⁰⁴ Against the view that these oracles form a 'corpus', see Reimer, 'Foe' and the 'North', *ZAW* 101 (1989), 228-29. See also Childs, *Enemy from the North*, *JBL* 78 (1959), 192-93.

⁴⁰⁵ The old 'Scythian hypothesis' is the classic representative of this approach. It rests on a misunderstanding Herodotus' description of Scythian domination in 'all Asia'. The phrase was thought to include Syria-Palestine, but it strictly refers to Asia Minor (*Hist.* i 104-6). For a thorough refutation of the Scythian hypothesis, see Vaggione, *Over All Asia?*, *JBL* 92 (1973), 523-30. Also helpful are the clarifying comments in McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 18-21. The other main option is to take Babylon as the 'enemy from the north', even if Babylon is not actually very 'north' of Judah. Only one text makes this identification clear (Jer 25.9), but Babylon is also threatened by the same enemy in other texts (50.3, 9, 41; 51.48). Reimer, 'Foe' and the 'North', 224-25.

⁴⁰⁶ See also Josh 13.27; Judg 12.1; Ezek 32.20. This fact was first recognised by Eissfeldt, *Baal Zaphon*, BRGA 1, Halle, 1932, 11-14. For a more recent account, see Wyatt, *Significance of ŠPN*, in: *Ugarit – ein ostmediterranes Kulturzentrum im Alten Orient*, ed. Dietrich and Loretz, ALASP 7, Münster, 1995, 216-18. Contra Day, *Yahweh*, *JSOTS* 265, Sheffield, 2000, 10-11.

⁴⁰⁷ Illustrative examples include: the epithet *b'l špn* in KTU 1.47:5, *passim*; descriptions such as the phrase *ḡr b'l ḥlm qdš* ('the mountain of Baal-Zaphon, the holy fortress') in KTU 1.16 i 7; the appearance of *špn* in god lists such as KTU 1.118:14; *špn* as the recipient of offerings in KTU 1.41:34; 1.148:6. See DUL II, 788; Eissfeldt, *Baal Zaphon*, 5-7; Lauha, *Zaphon*, AASF 49/2, Helsinki, 1943, 36-52; Langhe, *Les textes de Ras-Shamra-Ugarit*, Universitas catholica lovaniensis II/35, Gembloux, 1945, 217-44. see

followed, the claim being made by the phrase *מצפון תפתח הרעה* in Jer 1.14 would be that YHWH is the source of the disaster which will come upon Judah. This makes the statement all the more shocking, which the syntax of the phrase might even support, as *מצפון* is fronted for emphasis.⁴⁰⁸ The text itself does not point to a *foreign* threat against Jerusalem; it makes YHWH the source of the threat.

3.4. Summary

The two vision reports 1.11–14 elaborate the content of the message Jeremiah is to communicate. The first vision in 1.11–12 is concerned with YHWH's intent to act and the second vision in 1.13–14 is a statement of judgment which describes imminent disaster. Since there is an open possibility that *צפון* can have a mythological sense in the Hebrew Bible, the shocking claim implied in Jer 1.14 is that YHWH is the source of the disaster which will come upon Judah. The threat against Judah is not necessarily 'foreign', as it is brought by YHWH. However the phrase *מקל שקד* is interpreted, the vision expects that YHWH acts upon his word.

One of the primary functions of the visions in Jer 1.11–14 is to legitimise Jeremiah and confirm YHWH's support for his prophetic activity.⁴⁰⁹ In the immediate context, just after Jeremiah's commission as *נביא לגוים*, visions are clearly understood to be a part of prophetic activity, and their function does not seem to differ from other visions with warnings in the book (e.g. 4.23–26; 24.1–10). There is little reason to doubt the importance of visions for prophets in Jeremiah.⁴¹⁰ Thus, even though the means by which the message is received, there appears to be little reason to distinguish this text sharply from other prophetic oracles. This is but one example of the difficulty one has in contrasting visions (and dreams) from other forms of prophecy. Also, in a passage where Jeremiah 'sees' (*ראה*) what YHWH wishes to communicate, it is a little strange that so much emphasis has been placed on *דבר יהוה* as a concept.⁴¹¹ The 'word' and 'vision' support one another in

⁴⁰⁸ Hill, *Friend or Foe?*, BibInt 40, Leiden, 1999, 52.

⁴⁰⁹ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, 66–70; Hayes, Role of Visionary Experiences, in: *"I Lifted My Eyes and Saw"*, ed. Tiemeyer and Hayes, LHBOTS 584, London, 2014, 59–70.

⁴¹⁰ Anthonioz, *Le prophétisme biblique*, 24; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50. Though he is more interested in the authenticity of the visions in Jeremiah, Zimmerli, 'it can be clearly established that the preaching of Jeremiah certainly did not lack a visionary element.' Zimmerli, Visionary Experience in Jeremiah, in: *Israel's Prophetic Tradition*, ed. Coggins, Phillips, and Knibb, Cambridge, 1982, 114.

⁴¹¹ Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 122, 186–87.

this context, and to stress the priority of one over the other misses their cooperative function.

4. Jeremiah 1.15–19

Following the commission in Jer 1.4–10 and the two visions in 1.11–14 are a pair of oracles from YHWH, one negative and one positive. After the pair of visions in 1.11–14, the theme of YHWH's judgment and its relation to צפון continues in 1.15–16. YHWH announces that he is summoning all of the clans of the kingdoms of the north, who will then besiege Jerusalem. Because of the break signalled in 1.15 by the phrase 'for behold' (כי הנני), the shift of reference to human parties, and the disappearance of the closely paralleled and symmetrical structure of the two visions, these verses does not appear to be in the same textual subsection as 1.11–14.⁴¹² New themes are introduced in 1.15–19: Jerusalem as the recipient of YHWH's judgment (1.15), religious and cultic failures (1.16), and resistance from the local population. YHWH gives further instructions to Jeremiah and a final word of support.

4.1. Text and translation

- (15) כי הנני קרא לכל משפחות⁴¹³ ממלכות צפונה נאם יהוה ובאו ונתנו איש כסאו פתח
שערי ירושלם ועל כל חומתיה סביב ועל כל ערי יהודה
(16) ודברתי משפטי אותם על כל רעתם אשר עזבוני ויקטרו לאלהים אחרים וישתחוו
למעשי ידיהם
(17) ואתה תאזר מתניך וקמת ודברת אליהם את כל אשר אנכי אצוך אל תחת מפניהם
פן אחתך לפניהם
(18) ואני הנה נתתיך היום לעיר מבצר ולעמוד ברזל ולחמות נחשת על כל הארץ למלכי
יהודה לשריה לכהניה ולעם הארץ

⁴¹² Among those who treat Jer 1.11–16 as a unit are Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 104–08; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 26. Jer 1.15–16 are discussed separately in Herrmann, *Jeremia*, I, 76–79; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 16–21; Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 62–63.

⁴¹³ BHS deletes משפחות because it is absent in 6 and suggests it is a secondary insertion from Jer 25.9. The view represented by the *apparatus criticus* is that משפחות reduplicates the sense of ממלכות because the construct מְשַׁפְּחוֹת easily can be repointed to the absolute מְשַׁפְּחוֹת. Many commentators follow this view. See e.g. Cornill, *Jeremia*, Leipzig, 1905, 10; Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*, 5; Condamin, *Jéréme*, EtB 380, Paris, 1920, 5; Volz, *Jeremia*, KAT 10, Leipzig, 1928, 8; Bright, *Jeremiah*, AncB 21, Garden City, NY, 1965, 4; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 8; Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 22. In this case I do not find the grammar of 1.15 so difficult to warrant emendation. משפחות ממלכות is quite understandable as a construct, and the two terms are not strict synonyms; they indicate different levels of social organisation. Neither are the phrases לכל ממלכות צפונה in 1.15 and את כל משפחות צפון in 25.9 contradictory. The same argument raised against משפחות ממלכות in 1.15 could be used against phrases such as כל משפחות גוים in Ps 22.28 and הבו ליהוה משפחות עמים in Ps 96.7; 1 Chr 16.28. I do not find the arguments for the proposed emendation persuasive.

ונלחמו אליך ולא יוכלו לך כי אתך אני נאם יהוה להצילך (19)

- (15) For behold, I am calling all the clans of the kings⁴⁴⁴ from⁴⁴⁵ the north, oracle of YHWH, They will come and each will place his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, against all her surrounding walls around and all the cities of Judah.
- (16) I will announce my judgment to them, concerning all their wickedness by which they have forsaken me. They have sacrificed to other gods, and bowed down to the works of their hands.
- (17) So you, gird up your loins, arise, and speak to them everything I command you. Do not despair before them, lest I shatter you before them.
- (18) Behold I have appointed you this day a fortified city, an iron pillar and bronze walls against all the land, the kings of Judah, her officers, the priests and the people of the land.
- (19) They will attack you, but they will not overcome you, oracle of YHWH, for I am with you, to deliver you.

4.2. Opposition and attack

The commission YHWH gives Jeremiah forces him to fight on two fronts. The conclusion to the pericope of Jer 1.4–19 envisions two distinct threats which Jeremiah must face. The first relates to the disaster coming from the north, as external threats come against Jerusalem (1.15–16). The second relates to dissent within the ranks, so to speak, as Jeremiah is cast as an antagonist to the Judaeen leadership (1.17–19).

The phrase *משפחות ממלכות* is unique in Jeremiah, but is similar to the similar reference to the families of the north (*משפחות צפונה*) in 25.9. The lexeme *משפחות* appears nine times in Jeremiah,⁴⁴⁶ and has enough semantic overlap with *ממלכות* to lead many into thinking the text here is redundant. In the context of 1.15b–16 it makes good sense to read *ממלכות* as ‘kings’ since they would be the ones in possession of thrones to set up before the gates of Jerusalem.⁴⁴⁷ The situation described in 1.15, in my view, is very clearly a

⁴⁴⁴ Albright suggested this interpretation for Ps 68.33, noting the Phoenician term *ממלכה*. Albright, Oracles of Balaam, *JBL* 63 (1944), 218; Albright, Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems, *HUCA* 28 (1950), 34. Cf. Cazelles, *Mamleket* et ses compléments, *GLECS* 8 (1959), 57; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 18. See *mmlk* in DNWSI II, 648–49. Bruston notes 1 Sam 10.18 as an instance where *הממלכות* ‘qu’il pouvait désigner des individus, des princes, et non des royaumes’. Bruston, *Jérémie*, 77.

⁴⁴⁵ The *he locale* can indicate direction to or from a location. See IBHS §10.5. In Jeremiah this is used several times with the locution *צפונה* (‘from the north’); cf. Jer 1.13; 3.12; 23.8.

⁴⁴⁶ Jer 1.15; 2.4; 3.14; 8.3; 10.25; 15.3; 25.9; 31.1; 33.24.

⁴⁴⁷ See *mmlk* in DNWSI II, 648–49. Albright, Oracles of Balaam, 218; Albright, Catalogue of Early Hebrew Lyric Poems, 34.

description of a siege. The judgment (משפט) announced by YHWH in 1.16 pertains to Jerusalem and the walled cities of Judah on account of all their wickedness (כל רעתם). A litany of misdeeds completes the verse, as YHWH criticises them for forsaking (עזב *qal*) him, sacrificing to other gods (ויקטרו לאלהים אחרים),⁴¹⁸ and worshipping idols (וישתחוּוּ) (למעשי ידיהם).

In Jer 1.8 and 1.17, YHWH gives Jeremiah encouragement and support with two formulaic expressions: ‘fear not’ (אל תירא),⁴¹⁹ and ‘gird up your loins’ (תאזר מתניך).⁴²⁰ Both idioms are closely related to situations where one is preparing for conflict, war or strife. In 1.8, YHWH’s reassurance follows his instructions to Jeremiah; YHWH will be with him (אתך אני) in order to deliver him (להצילך). The context is similar in 1.17, though the sense is more combative. Jeremiah is to gird up his loins, arise (קום *qal*), and to speak (דבר *piel*) everything that YHWH commands (צוה *piel*). The final phrase in 1.17b is both supportive and not; YHWH encourages Jeremiah by telling him not to despair, or be dismayed, but then threatens him should he do so. The two instances of the verb חתת, one *niphal* and one *hiphil*, have the senses ‘despair’ and ‘shatter’ respectively.⁴²¹ Should Jeremiah falter, all will be lost.

Opposition to Jeremiah also comes in the form of local resistance as well. YHWH reassures Jeremiah with promises of security and inviolability.⁴²² In Jer 1.18 (cf. 15.20), YHWH says he has made Jeremiah into a fortified city (עיר מבצר), an iron pillar (עמוד ברזל), and a wall of bronze (חומת נחשת).⁴²³ The images are meant to illustrate resistance to the onslaught of enemies, and they express divine support and protection.⁴²⁴ Instead of protection against *foreign* enemies, however, these provisions of support barricade

⁴¹⁸ See HALOT II, 1094–95. Forms of קטר appear in Jer 7:9; 11:12, 13, 17; 18:15; 19:4, 13; 32:29; 33:18; 44:3, 5, 8, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 25; 48:35.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. Gen 15.1; 21.17; 26.24; 35.17; 43.23; 46.3; 50.19; 50.21; Exod 14.13; 20.17; Num 14.9; 21.34; Deut 1.21; 3.2; 20.3; 31.6; Josh 8.1; 10.8; 10.25; 11.6; Judg 4.18; 6.23; 1 Sam 4.20; 12.20; 22.23; 23.17; 28.13; 2 Sam 9.7; 13.28; 1 Kgs 17.13; 2 Kgs 1.15; 6.16; 19.6; 25.24; Isa 7.4; 10.24; 35.4; 37.6; 40.9; 41.10, 13–14; 43.1, 5; 44.2; 51.7; 54.4; Jer 1.8; 10.5; 30.10; 40.9; 42.11; 46.27–28; Eek 2.6; Joel 2.21–22; Zeph 3.16; Hag 2.5; Zech 8.13, 15; Ps 49.17; Job 5.22; Prov 3.25; Ruth 3.11; Lam 3.57; Dan 10.12, 19; Neh 4.8; 1 Chr 22.13; 28.20; 2 Chr 20.15, 17; 32.7. See Nissinen, *Fear Not*, in: *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Sweeney and Ben Zvi, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003, 122–61.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Job 38.3; 40.7. Note also the idiom אזור חיל in 1 Sam 2.4 and אזור *hiphil* in Isa 8.9 (x2). For אזור, see DCH I, 172; HALOT I, 28; Gesenius¹⁸, 31.

⁴²¹ See HALOT I, 365; DCH III, 337–38.

⁴²² Riede, *Ich mache dich zur festen Stadt*, 82–86. Additionally, see Maier, *Jeremiah as YHWH’s Stronghold*.

⁴²³ The two phrases are joined together as חומת נחשת בצורה (‘fortified wall of bronze’) in Jer 15.20.

⁴²⁴ Alt, *Hic murus aheneus esto*, 46–48.

Jeremiah from his own land (עַל כָּל הָאָרֶץ); the kings of Judah, the officers, the priests and all the people are the ones who will attack (נִפְחַל לַחֵם) Jeremiah.⁴²⁵ Despite the fact that Jeremiah will be attacked, he will not be overcome (וְלֹא יִכְבְּלוּ לָךְ). A final saying of divine support is identical to the one found in 1.8; YHWH will be with Jeremiah (כִּי אֲתָךְ אֲנִי) in order to deliver him (לְהַצִּילְךָ).⁴²⁶ Such a strong expression of salvation and deliverance is rare for the book (cf. 42.11; 46.28).

4.3. Summary

YHWH gives Jeremiah a commission which inherently involves conflict. The two distinct threats which Jeremiah must face are both domestic and foreign. As external threats come against Jerusalem, most importantly a siege (Jer 1.15–16), Jeremiah will also deal with an antagonistic relationship with the Judaeen leadership (1.17–19). This is further emphasised by the two phrases ‘fear not’ and ‘gird up your loins’ (1.8, 17). Both idioms are closely related to situations of strife and conflict, and especially the ‘fear not’ (אַל תִּירָא) formula is common in prophetic speech.⁴²⁷

Among those opposing Jeremiah are the priests (כֹּהֲנִים) of Judah, and the criticisms YHWH lists as reasons for his ‘judgment’ (מִשְׁפֶּט) against Jerusalem are primarily cultic in nature. These data should not be taken to indicate an antagonistic relationship between prophet and cult. In my view, the opposite conclusion is preferable, that the concern for illicit offerings and worship offered to idols and other gods indicates their importance for prophecy. The entire leadership is criticised for a failure to worship YHWH properly; the rhetorical force of the prophetic statement depends on the significance of these practices for the parties involved.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁵ See other lists of political figures in Jer 2.26; 4.9; 8.1; 13.13; 17.25; 21.7; 24.1, 8; 25.19; 26.11, 12, 16; 29.2, 16; 32.32; 34.19, 21; 37.2; 39.3, 13; 44.9, 17, 21. The only texts out of this selection which include the עַם הָאָרֶץ are 34.19; 37.2; 44.21

⁴²⁶ On the phrase כִּי אֲתָךְ אֲנִי see Görg, »Ich bin mit Dir«, *ThGl* 70 (1980), 214–40; Schmidt, Sogenannte Berufungsformular, in: *Exodus*, BKAT II/1, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1988, 126–27.

⁴²⁷ Nissinen, Fear Not. On the relation of the phrase אַל תִּירָא and war, see Weippert, Assyrische Prophetien, in: *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions*, ed. Fales, *Orientalis antiqui collectio* 17, Rome, 1981, 71–115; Toorn, L’oracle de victoire.

⁴²⁸ This is a more recent way of thinking about cultic criticisms in prophetic speech; instead of showing a prophetic rejection of the cult, these polemics serve different rhetorical purposes. See Eidevall, Role of Sacrificial Language, in: *Ritual and Metaphor*, ed. Eberhart, SBLRBS 68, Atlanta, GA, 2011, 49–61.

5. Conclusion

What does Jer 1.4–19 say about prophets? The pericope of Jer 1.4–19 may only have one instance of the word **נביא**, but it is a distillation of several important themes and concepts of prophecy which are programmatic for the book. Its basic concerns in this regard, as I argue, have to do with legitimacy and authority. Jeremiah's appointment as a **נביא לגוים** is famous among biblical scholars as a unique description of a prophet. However, the uniqueness of this phrase should not overshadow the more typical aspects of the description seen in its context.⁴²⁹

To summarise the content of the text, the three sections of Jer 1.4–10, 11–14 and 15–19 each provide reassurances to the prophet. In Jer 1.4–10, YHWH appoints Jeremiah as a prophet to the nations (**נביא לגוים**). Prophecy is construed in relation to nations (**גוים**), kingdoms (**ממלכות**) and tribes (**משפחות**), who appear related to the themes of war and siege in 1.11–14 and 15–19. These themes are also related to the conceptual sphere of worship and cult, as failures to worship YHWH properly are cited as grounds for judgment. Though his commission involves conflict, for which he must prepare (1.17), Jeremiah is encouraged with the common expression to 'fear not' (1.8). In addition, the text uses a common cultural motif where a deity expresses support for an individual from the womb (1.5). A final image describes him as a fortress resistant to attack (1.18). Jeremiah is 'sent' and 'commanded' to go and speak on YHWH's behalf. These are basic conceptual spheres which relate to prophetic authority seen throughout the book. The prophetic message is construed as both positive and negative, as it may be favourable or unfavourable for those who receive it (1.10); the text does not authorise one kind of prophetic message over another.⁴³⁰ Jeremiah is portrayed as an effective prophet, who rightly divines the meaning of visions from YHWH (cf. **היטבת לראות** in 1.12), and whom YHWH will support and save (1.8, 19). YHWH acts upon his word, which has been entrusted to Jeremiah; should he waver, YHWH will judge him (1.17).

Common ancient Near Eastern motifs are used to support the authority of the prophet. Jeremiah is often described as a 'prophet like Moses' based on Jer 1.4–10, but one also could say that Jeremiah's 'prophet like-ness' is related to common conceptions of

⁴²⁹ Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 54–55.

⁴³⁰ Schmidt refers to the authorisation as 'situationsübergreifend wie allgemeingrundsätzlich'. Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 49–50. Cf. Jong, *Fallacy of "True and False"*, 29.

prophecy in the ancient Near Eastern milieu. Particularly important in this regard is the way that Jeremiah being ‘sent’ matches similar descriptions of prophecy in Mari; though debated, there is still a wide range of support for the view that this is a basic element in the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy.⁴³¹ In my view, it is not necessary to explain them in 1.4–10 in terms of their connection to Deuteronomy.⁴³² The idea of ‘being sent’ is widespread in Jeremiah, and will be discussed in more detail later in the present work.

As it is discussed in Jer 1.4–19, being a ‘prophet to the nations’ describes a function, not necessarily a role. There is a broad semantic range for the idea of being a prophet to the nations, as the text understands Jeremiah’s prophetic function to affect a range of social strata, including its highest levels of organisation (cf. 1.10, 15, 18). This should be preferred to construing the function of a נביא לגוים to primarily ‘foreign’ entities.⁴³³

Biographical readings, even if restricted to a purely ‘literary’ concept of biography, appear to miss these themes.⁴³⁴ Jeremiah’s self-description as a נער has encouraged these readings when understood primarily in terms of age.⁴³⁵ Instead, it should be understood as a lack of rank and authority, not of age and maturity. Divine support from the womb is a common cultural motif related to concerns of legitimacy and authority in the face of opposition or rivalry (cf. 1.8, 17–19).⁴³⁶ This does not necessarily function to claim an intimacy between Jeremiah and YHWH, in implicit contrast with other ‘false’ prophets.

Visions are portrayed as a part of the prophetic task.⁴³⁷ Here it is important to note that their function in the pericope is to legitimate the prophet and confirm YHWH’s support for his prophetic activity.⁴³⁸ In terms of the means of communication between deity and prophet, a *formal* difference between ‘seeing’ and ‘speaking’ does not imply a *functional* difference.⁴³⁹ This text gives no indication of a sharp division between types of

⁴³¹ Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182–97; Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 221–24.

⁴³² In support, see Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 47–48; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*, 154–55.

⁴³³ Allen, *Jeremiah*, OTL, Louisville, KY, 2008, 28.

⁴³⁴ Cf. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 143; Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 125.

⁴³⁵ Allen, *Jeremiah*, 22, 26.

⁴³⁶ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 129–35.

⁴³⁷ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50. Using a cognitive approach, Hayes argues that ‘both the visions and the speech situations used to frame the visions taken together are vital for establishing prophetic authority.’ Hayes, *Role of Visionary Experiences*, 59–70, cit. 59.

⁴³⁸ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, 66–70; Hayes, *Role of Visionary Experiences*.

⁴³⁹ This is in contrast to the view of Stökl. In his view, since visions ‘have their own terminology’ this

prophetic intermediation, nor does it make visionary experience the grounds for authentic prophetic experience. Instead, it suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech.⁴⁴⁰ More will be said later in this work about the relationship between prophecy and visions.

demonstrates 'that they were a form of communication distinct from prophecy.' Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 223.

⁴⁴⁰ Mayes, Prophecy and Society in Israel, in: *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of the Sages*, ed. McKay and Clines, JSOTS 162, Sheffield, 1993, 25–42; Anthonioz, *Le prophétisme biblique*, 24; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50. Similarly, an 'evolutionary' paradigm where visions are superseded by rational speech should not be accepted either. Cf. the suggestion that Jeremiah represents a 'transitional stage' toward an emphasis on YHWH's word in Zimmerli, Visionary Experience in Jeremiah, 115. 'Word' is similarly prioritised in Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 122, 186–87.

Chapter 4. Jeremiah 23.9–40

1. Preliminary remarks

In Jer 23.9–40 there is a lengthy discussion of prophets, their oracles and their activities. This discussion is not always positive; many of these verses are deeply polemical as they judge prophets harshly. The text unit of Jer 23.9–15 begins with the heading לְנִבִּיִּים ('for the prophets'), which marks the opening textual boundary of 23.9–40. The subject matter of the text follows the cue of the heading. The words, activities and behaviours of prophets are one of the central concerns of the text; the lexeme נִבִּיא appears 17 times in the pericope.⁴⁴¹ Within 23.9–40 are five subsections, each pertaining to prophets in the main, but showing enough variation in emphasis to deserve their own comments: 23.9–15, 16–22, 23–24, 25–32 and 33–40.

2. Jeremiah 23.9–15

A collection of poetic oracles concerning prophets and priests in Jer 23.9–15 make up the first subsection of 23.9–40. The text is primarily critical of prophets and priests for the negative consequences their actions have for the land of Judah. Matters related to the cult are highly important for these verses. The concepts of impurity, profanation, pollution, adultery and apostasy are all found in 23.13–15. Specific criticisms are levelled against prophets associated with Samaria and Jerusalem.

2.1. Text and translation

- (9) לְנִבְאִים נִשְׁבַּר לִבִּי בִקְרָבִי רַחֲפוּ כָל עֲצָמוֹתַי הֵייתִי כְאִישׁ שָׁכּוּר וְכִגְבֵּר עָבְרוּ יַיִן מִפְּנֵי
יְהוָה וּמִפְּנֵי דְבָרֵי קִדְשׁוֹ
- (10) כִּי⁴⁴² מִנְאִפִּים מְלֹאָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲבֵלָה הָאָרֶץ יִבְשׁוּ נְאוֹת מְדָבָר וְתֵהִי
מְרוֹצֶתָם רָעָה וְגִבּוֹרָתָם לֹא כֵן

⁴⁴¹ Jer 23.9, 11, 13, 14, 15(x2), 16, 21, 25, 26(x2), 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 37.

⁴⁴² BHS (*probabiliter*) inserts וּמִרְעִים after the first כִּי in Jer 23.10. Rudolph justifies this 'versuchsweise' change on metrical grounds, as it results in a 'notwendigen Vollzeile'. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 148. So also Duhm, *Jeremia*, 183; Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*. In my view, meter does not provide the most secure support for emending the text in Jer 23.10.

- (11) כי גם נביא גם כהן חנפו גם־בביתי מצאתי רעתם נאם יהוה
 (12) לכן יהיה דרכם להם כחלקלקות באפלה ידחו ונפלו בה כי אביא עליהם רעה שנת
 פקדתם נאם יהוה
 (13) ובנביאי שמרון ראיתי תפלה הנבאו בבעל ויתעו את־עמי את ישראל
 (14) ובנבאי ירושלם ראיתי שערורה נאוף והלך בשקר וחזקו ידי מרעים לבלתי שבו⁴⁴³
 איש מרעתו היו לי כלם כסדם וישביה בעמרה
 (15) לכן כה־אמר יהוה צבאות על הנבאים הנני מאכיל אותם לענה והשקתים מי ראש
 כי מאת נביאי ירושלם יצאה חנפה לכל הארץ

- (9) For the prophets.⁴⁴⁴ My heart is broken within me, all my bones quiver;⁴⁴⁵ I have become like a drunk, and like a man who is overcome by wine,⁴⁴⁶ because of YHWH and because of his holy words.
 (10) For the land is full of adulterers, the land withers because of a curse,⁴⁴⁷ the pastures of the wilderness are dried up; their race is evil, their strength is not right.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ BHS reads the *yiqtol* יִשְׁבוּ in place of שָׁבוּ in L. Typically לַבְלִי negates an infinitive construct, or sometimes a *yiqtol* verb (GKC §152x; see Exod 20.20). The perfect tense verb here is incorrect (Joüon-Muraoka §160l; GKB, §28b). See also Jer 27.18. For these grammatical reasons, I adopt the reading proposed in the *apparatus criticus*.

⁴⁴⁴ The majority of interpreters read לַנְּבִיאִים in Jer 23.9 as a heading rather than integrate it in the syntax of the rest of the verse. Here לַנְּבִיאִים has a similar function to headings in some 'oracles against the nations' (46.2; 48.1; 49.1; 49.7; 49.23), as well as the phrase מֶלֶךְ יְהוּדָה in 21.11 (cf. Isa 8.1; Ezek 37.16). On the so-called *lamed inscriptionis*, see GKC §19u.

⁴⁴⁵ The lexeme רָחַף appears three times in the Hebrew Bible and as *qal* verb only here in Jer 23.11. Two instances of the verb in the *piel* are found in Gen 1.2 and Deut 32.11. In Gen 1.2 the phrase וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת describes the spirit of God 'hovering' over the primordial waters, and in Deut 32.11 the phrase יְעִיר כְּנֹשָׁר יְעִיר קִנּוּ עַל גּוֹזְלָיו וְרָחַף describes a bird of prey 'hovering' over its young. Surveying the standard lexica one finds meanings for רָחַף *piel* related to hovering and fluttering, as with the wings of a bird: רָחַף II 'hover, tremble' (DCH VII, 472); 'tremble', *piel* 'hover and tremble' (HALOT II, 1220); 'zitternd schweben' (HALAT IV, 1137–38); 'beben, zittern' (Gesenius¹⁸, 1237); 'נע', רָעַד, *piel* 'פרח' עָרַף (Even-Shoshan III, 1996); 'dislocarse, entrenchocar' (DBHE, 700); cf. Jenni, *Der hebräische Pi'el*, 139. See cognates in causative stems, e.g. Ugaritic *rhpt* (G f. ptc.) as in the phrase *rhpt* [b šm]m rm[m] 'who hovers in the high heavens' (KTU 1.108:8) and *rhpt* (D) 'to fly about' (KTU 1.18 iv 21, 31, 32; 1.19 i 32; see DUL II, 727–28; Aistleitner, *Wörterbuch der ugaritischen Sprache*, 2508.); Syriac *rhpt* pa. 'to hover over' (LS, 1458). The meaning of רָחַף *qal* is much less certain. In the context of Jer 23.9 רָחַף is in parallel with שָׁבַר *niphal* 'to be broken'. Various Arabic cognates are suggested in the lexica, the most commonly accepted one being *rahaf* 'be soft' (BDB, 934; DCH VII, 472; Keil, *Jeremia*, BC III/2, Leipzig, 1872, 264.). This verb is not listed in Lane, but can be found in Freytag, *Lexicon arabico-latinorum*, 4 vols., Halle, 1830–37, II, 134–35. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 626. Others are mentioned as well, e.g., *raffa*, *rafrafa* 'beben, flattern' (Gesenius¹⁸, 1237; cf. KBL, 886–87; Gesenius¹⁷, 756).

⁴⁴⁶ On a relative clause following a substantive, see GKC §126p, §155g–h.

⁴⁴⁷ Some commentators have been troubled by אֱלֵה ('curse') in Jer 23.10, though the term is used similarly in 29.18; 42.18; 44.12. My reading is similar to the one suggested by Barthélemy et al., 'oui, à cause de la malédiction, le pays est dans le deuil'. Similar uses of the lexeme אֱלֵה without the article can be found in Isa 24.6; Ez 16.59; 17.18; see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, rapport final du Comité pour l'analyse textuelle de l'Ancien Testament hébreu institué par l'Alliance Biblique Universelle, OBO 50/2, Fribourg/Göttingen, 1986, 642.

⁴⁴⁸ I read כֵּן as a substantive in parallel with רָעָה 'evil', as in '(what is) right, true'. A similar meaning is found in Jer 48.30, where לֹא כֵּן cannot describe a non-existent thing (cf. 2 Kgs 17.9). So also Holladay, *Jeremi-*

- (11) For both prophet and priest are polluted; even in my house I find their wickedness, oracle of YHWH.⁴⁴⁹
- (12) So their path will be to them like slippery ground, they will be pushed⁴⁵⁰ into darkness and there they shall fall; for I will bring disaster upon them, the year of their visitation, oracle of YHWH.
- (13) And in the prophets of Samaria I have seen offensiveness; they prophesied by Baal and led astray my people Israel.
- (14) And in the prophets of Jerusalem I have seen repulsiveness; adultery and walking in deceit, and they strengthen the hands of the wicked⁴⁵¹ so that no one turns from his wickedness; they have all become to me like Sodom, and her inhabitants⁴⁵² like Gomorrah.
- (15) So thus says YHWH of Hosts to the prophets, behold I will make them eat wormwood and make them drink bitter waters; for from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution has gone out to the whole land.

2.2. Concerning the prophets

A series of critical statements directed against both prophets and priests are found in Jer 23.9–15. Specific attention to 23.10–11 and the instances where prophet and priest are mentioned together will follow a little further on.⁴⁵³ Here the context of the passage and its central themes will be discussed.

The language of these verses is closely related to the genre of lament (e.g., cf. Jer 4.19–21), and the majority of interpreters see the phrases in 23.9 as spoken by the prophet Jeremiah out of his own personal despair brought on by YHWH's holy words.⁴⁵⁴ In the first

ah 1–25, 279.

⁴⁴⁹ Here the *qatal* is translated in English in the present tense though it is 'expressing the passing of a phase', i.e. a past event. Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 199–200.

⁴⁵⁰ It is unclear whether the verb יִדְחוּ derives from either דָּחַח or דָּחַח, but both roots are understood by the standard lexica to have essentially the same meaning. See DCH II, 431; HALAT I, 209–10; cf. Bauer-Leander §57t', p. 423; GKB §134n. See also 2 Sam 14.14; Pr 14.32.

⁴⁵¹ On *weqatal* in this construction, see IBHS §32.2.5d. On *weqatal* in direct speech, see Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 225–26.

⁴⁵² It is most likely that the 3fs suffix of וְיִשְׁבִּיָּהּ refers back to יְרוּשָׁלַם near the start of the verse, but the distance between the pronominal suffix and its referent leaves some room for ambiguity. This has led some to propose emendations which seek to clarify the suffix's referent. For example, Duhm proposed reading וְיִשְׁבִּי עֲמֻרָה (Duhm, *Jeremia*, 185.) and Rudolph suggested וְיִחַדְדִּי(י) perhaps with Jer 3.18 in view (Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 150.; cf. Isa 40.22; 51.6; Ezek 26.17; Mic 6.12, 16). In this case I agree with McKane that the 'distance of וְיִשְׁבִּיָּהּ from יְרוּשָׁלַם is awkward, but should be tolerated.' McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 576.

⁴⁵³ See in this chapter, section 2.3, page 122.

⁴⁵⁴ Note how Oeming frames the issue, 'Gottes Unheilswort und die Wahrnehmung der Mißstände in Israel lassen den wahren Propheten wie einen zitternden Trunkenbold erscheinen'. Oeming, שָׁכַר, ThWAT VIII (1995), 4. Cf. Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 710. However, there is a minority view which holds that YHWH speaks in

half of 23.9, the language is quite similar to descriptions of personal distress found in the 'confessions' of Jeremiah.⁴⁵⁵ Two metaphors for distress, broken-heartedness and drunkenness, are used to describe a state of shock or concern in the lamenter. A broken heart (נשבר לבי בקרבי) is a common image which is further amplified by what follows; the unusual motif of quivering bones, with the verb רָחַף, matches the description of the inner parts of a person being incapacitated due to deep distress.⁴⁵⁶ These are not primarily emotional states, rather they describe a deep-seated concern related to the activity and behaviour of the prophets and priests.⁴⁵⁷

Similarly, a state of drunkenness is described in poetic parallelism with the phrases כגבר עברו יין and הייתי כאיש שכור. These precise constructions are unique to the passage, but both phrases express the idea of an otherwise able male incapacitated by the overconsumption of alcohol.⁴⁵⁸ Much of the language in Jeremiah which is related to being drunk is metaphorical. Images of strong drink and its aftermath, such as the vomit and stupor brought upon the nations after drinking from YHWH's cup of wrath are used to describe YHWH's judgment upon Israel and Judah (Jer 25.27; cf. 48.26; 51.7, 39, 57).⁴⁵⁹ It is not necessary to assume that the lament language 23.9–12 arises from a personal feeling of conviction or emotion; the language is common to the book and is not strictly related to the 'emotional' sphere. Rather, the criticisms against the prophets, and priests, have a strongly cultic character.

23.9 and assumes the role of a divine lamenter (cf. Jer 8.18–23; 12.7–13; 13.20–27; 15.5–9). This language, as Roberts points out, is very similar to those spoken by the gods in ancient Near Eastern city-laments. Roberts, *Motif of the Weeping God*, OTE 5 (1992), 361–74.

⁴⁵⁵ Baumgartner suggested a connection between Jer 23.9 and 4.19. Baumgartner, *Die Klagegedichte des Jeremia*, BZAW 32, Giessen, 1917, 74–75.

⁴⁵⁶ The lexeme עצם 'bone' (see Jer 20.9) metaphorically refers to the 'seat of pain or feeling' (DCH VI, 534–37).

⁴⁵⁷ Holladay, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 625.

⁴⁵⁸ Jer 23.9 is the only occurrence of the lexeme שכור 'drunk' in the book. See DCH VIII, 349. In all cases שכור has negative overtones; it is used in narrative literature to describe individuals negatively perceived (1 Sam 1.13; 25.36; 1 Kgs 16.9; 20.16) and in prophetic texts שכור is used primarily in oracles of judgment and doom (Isa 19.14; 24.20; 28.1, 3; Joel 1.5). See Oeming, שָׁכַר, ThWAT VIII. The nominal form שכרון appears in Jer 13.13, where YHWH announces destruction upon the inhabitants of the land, the Davidic kings, the priests and the prophets. See also note 524 on page 133.

⁴⁵⁹ In these texts the theme of drunkenness is not a part of moral or ethical judgments of social behaviours; שכור is consistently used as a metaphor for the judgment of YHWH rendered against a nation or people (Jer 25.15–29; 48.26, 49.12; 51.57). McKane, *Jeremiah* i–xxv, 297–98.

After the judgment declared by YHWH in Jer 23.12, a new section of text in 23.13–15 opens with references to misdeeds observed in the prophets of Samaria and Jerusalem. Two phrases in 23.13 and 23.14 introduce accusations for these two groups: **ובנביאי שמרון** and **ובנבאי ירושלם ראייתי שערורה** as they both describe the religious failures of these groups.⁴⁶⁰ These two phrases mark out the basic structure of the passage: the two groups are named in 23.13–14, accusations of wrongdoing follow, and then an announcement of judgment concludes the section at 23.15.

Prophets in Samaria and Jerusalem are criticised in mirroring phrases with two negative terms in parallel; **שערורה** and **תפלה** are somewhat uncommon criticisms of prophets. First the prophets of Samaria are criticised as ‘offensive’ with the lexeme **תפלה**, and the precise meaning of this word is not immediately clear.⁴⁶¹ In the parallelism of Jer 23.13–14, **תפלה** should be understood in relation to **שערורה**, a term which is sharply critical and negative. The lexeme **שערורה** derives from **שער** with the sense ‘to be horrible’, and it only appears three times in Jeremiah (5.30; 18.13; 23.14). In 5.30 it is used in parallel with **שמה** (‘desolation’). Thus these two terms do not differ in their severity; rather they express a similar attitude toward behaviours which are reprehensible and objectionable on religious and ethical grounds.⁴⁶² The particular failures of the prophetic groups, which are largely related to matters related to cultic matters and apostasy, are articulated in greater detail in what follows.

The Samaritan prophets’ ‘offensiveness’ outlined in Jer 23.13 is that they prophesy by Ba’al and lead astray (**תעה**) the people.⁴⁶³ Only in Jer 2.8 does the same accusation of

⁴⁶⁰ There are only a few collocations where **נביא** is the *nomen regens*. The two constructs **נביאי שמרון** in Jer 23.13 and **נבאי [נביאי] ירושלם** in 23.14, 15 are unique. In Jeremiah these references are limited to this passage. Cf. Ezek 13.2, 16; 38.17. The association of **נביאים** with particular locales occurs sporadically; see, e.g., 1 Sam 10.5; 1 Kgs 22.10; 2 Kgs 2.3, 5, 15.

⁴⁶¹ The word only appears here and in Job 1.22, where it describes how Job did not make an accusation against God for his suffering. The sense of ‘taste’ does not seem to fit the contexts of Jer 23.13 or Job 1.22. Job’s accusation of ‘tastelessness’ would make little sense, and the sharply negative context of Jer 23.13–15 seems to demand a stronger sense. See the view of Fischer: ‘Es handelt sich um Unrechtes, das Gottes Blick nicht entgeht.’ Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 692. McKane reasons via English that the connection between ‘taste’ and ‘sense’ is evident in the way that a lack of taste ‘develops in the direction of “intellectual discrimination”’; in my view, this argument is a bit wide of the mark. McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 573–74.

⁴⁶² In this view I follow McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 574. There are others who see an escalation of criticism and guilt from Jer 23.13–14, where the behaviour of the Jerusalem prophets is understood as far worse than their Samaritan counterparts. For this view, see Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 631; Fischer, *Jeremia 1–25*, 692.

⁴⁶³ For a similar combination of **תעה** and **נביא**, cf. Mic 3.5–8.

prophesying by Ba'al occur, though the verb נבא in 23.14 is *hiphil* while in 2.8 it is *niphal*.⁴⁶⁴ This polemic does not imply any rejection of prophetic speech as such; this accusation directed at the prophets of Samaria is primarily cultic in nature as it relates directly to the theme of apostasy. The result of their prophesying by Ba'al is that the people are 'led astray' (תעה *hiphil*), an accusation which implies a deceitful attempt to mislead or misguide (see 23.32). The connotations of תעה *hiphil* are strongly religious, where the idea of 'straying' or 'wandering' indicates a kind of religious error, or a failure to obey and follow YHWH (cf. 2 Kgs 21.9; 2 Chr 33.9).⁴⁶⁵ Therefore the result of the prophets' behaviour is religious apostasy.

As one of the primary deities in the local, 'foreign' (i.e. 'Canaanite') pantheon, Ba'al is a frequent target of disdain in the Hebrew Bible. Ba'al was understood as a competitor to YHWH and one of the main threats to maintaining devotion to YHWH. There are a number of instances of the lexeme בעל in Jeremiah which refer to the deity Ba'al (Jer 2.8; 7.9; 11.13, 17; 12.16; 19.5; 23.13, 17; 32.29) as well as the plural הבעלים as an encompassing term for illegitimate gods (2.23; 9.13). In 23.13 the accusation directed against the prophets of Samaria in Jer 23.13 is that נבאו בבעל ('they prophesy by Ba'al').⁴⁶⁶ The lexeme בעל appears 16 times in Jeremiah, twice in verbal form referring to YHWH's relationship with Israel as husband (Jer 3.14; 31.32), once in the phrase בעל פקדת ('officer of the gates') where it refers to the title of a public official (37.13). The remaining 11 occurrences are the singular בעל and relate to the deity (2.8; 7.9; 11.13, 17; 12.16; 19.5 (x2); 23.13, 27; 32.29, 35), and a further two are the plural בעלים (2.23; 9.13).

As it is easy to recognise, most of the texts in Jeremiah which refer to Ba'al do so in reference to worship practices. Some references are metaphorical, as in the phrase הלך אחרי הבעלים, which is a general description for apostasy (Jer 2.23; 9.13).⁴⁶⁷ In 9.13 the act of

⁴⁶⁴ Jer 2.8 and 23.14 are the only instances of נבא + בבעל in Jeremiah. Other texts in Jeremiah draw a contrast between YHWH's name and Ba'al. In 12.16 a contrast is drawn by YHWH between להשבע בשמי ('to swear by my name') and להשבע בבעל ('to swear by Ba'al'), and in 23.27 YHWH criticises prophets who plan להשכיה את עמי שמי ('to cause my people to forget my name') in the same manner that שכחו אבותם את שמי ('their fathers forgot my name because of Ba'al'). Cf. the criticism of Ephraim, ויאשם בבעל ('and he incurred guilt by Ba'al') in Hos 13.1

⁴⁶⁵ Martens, תעה, NIDOTTE IV (1996), 319.

⁴⁶⁶ There is a close connection to the polemics directed against אלהים אחרים ('other gods') found in Jeremiah. For occurrences of the phrase אלהים אחרים, see Jer 1.16; 7.6, 9, 18; 11.10; 13.10; 16.11, 13; 19.4, 13; 22.9; 25.6; 32.29; 35.15; 44.3, 5, 8, 15.

⁴⁶⁷ Mulder supposes this indicates a cultic action, that 'feierliche Prozessionen werden genannt' in Hos 2.15; cf. Deut 4.3; Jer 2.23; 9.13. Cf. Mulder, בעל, ThWAT I (1973), 724.

following after Ba'al is parallel to following after one's own stubbornness (אחרי שררות), an act of disobedience usually found in Jeremiah as an antonym for heeding or listening to YHWH in worship or counsel (see 3.17; 7.24; 11.8; 13.10; 16.12; 18.12; 23.17). In a few cases the current disobedience of the people is likened to the behaviour of their ancestors (9.13; 16.12). In the case of 23.27, the prophets are accused of planning (חשב) to cause the people to forget YHWH's name by means of Ba'al in the same way that their ancestors did.⁴⁶⁸

In the prophets of Jerusalem, YHWH observes a list of misdeeds and ill behaviour, beginning with a phrase with two infinitive absolutes, נאוף והלך בשקר ('adultery and walking in lies'). These infractions, together as a pair, form a unique accusation not only in Jeremiah but in the Hebrew Bible.⁴⁶⁹ The critical question, as it has been for several of the accusations examined in 23.9–15 so far, is what kind of behaviour is implied by these statements. Do the prophets of Jerusalem fail in their moral obligations, or are these critiques metaphors for religious activity?

There are several clues that suggest these are religious critiques. Since the phrase הלך בשקר is unique, we will focus on the lexeme נאף ('adultery'), which appears only a handful of times in Jeremiah in key texts that criticise the people and the religious and national leadership (Jer 3.8, 9; 5.7; 7.9; 9.1; 13.27; 23.10, 14; 29.23).⁴⁷⁰ In almost all cases, the lexeme נאף does not seem to indicate a moral failure; rather it has a strongly cultic character. Some instances of נאף may be references to illicit sexual behaviour which is objectionable on moral grounds. Adultery is one of the activities criticised in 7.9, and it is unclear whether it is a moral or cultic infraction which is in view.⁴⁷¹ The people of Judah are

⁴⁶⁸ See Herrmann, Baal בעל, DDD, (1999), 138. Other illicit forms of Ba'al worship are found in polemics against sacrifices. Specific practices are polemicised in the rejection of burnt offerings (Jer 7.9; 11.13, 17), human sacrifices (32.35), and building shrines (11.13, 17; 32.25). Two texts also fit within the theme of Ba'al worship, though do not likely refer to historical practice. In both Jer 19.5 and 32.35 (cf. 7.31) there are references to human sacrifice to both Ba'al and Molech. Some think these references may refer to a form of divinatory sacrifice in times of extreme crisis, but this is not likely. See Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice*, BZAW 338, Berlin, 2004, 283–99. See also Heider, Molech מלך, DDD, (1999), 581–85.

⁴⁶⁹ Holladay notes the presence of the lexemes נאף (inf. abs.), הלך and שקר in Jer 7.6, but the similarities between 23.14 and 7.6 are only general. Also, the phrase הלך בשקר is absent in 7.6. Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 631–32.

⁴⁷⁰ The lexeme נאף appears 34 times in the Hebrew Bible; see Exod 20.14; Lev 20.10; Deut 5.18; Isa 57.3; Jer 3.8, 9; 5.7; 7.9; 9.1; 13.27; 23.10, 14; 29.23; Ezek 16.32, 38; 23.37, 43; 23.45; Hos 2.4; 3.1; 4.2, 13; 4.14; 7.4; Mal 3.5; Ps 50.18; Job 24.15; Prov 6.32; 30.20. Cf. also the parallel between נאפופים and זנונים in Hos 2.4.

⁴⁷¹ The first two words of Jer 7.6, הגנב רצח ('will you steal, murder'), are not separated with a ו, but all of the illicit behaviour listed thereafter are: ונאף ('and [commit] adultery'); והשבע לשקר ('and swear falsely');

criticised in 9.1 for being adulterers and עֲצֵרֶת בְּגָדִים ('a band of rebels').⁴⁷² The only other place where prophets are charged with adultery is in 29.23, where נָאִף is used to describe the behaviour of Ahab and Zedekiah, a reference which is usually understood to indicate literal sexual infidelity.⁴⁷³ However, even this reference is debatable. Since the term appears mostly in cultic criticisms related to covenant fidelity, and since it is combined with שָׁקֵר in other polemics directed against prophets, נָאִף appears to be more related to religious and cultic concerns. In 3.6–11, the metaphor of the sisters Israel and Judah, the adultery (נָאִף) and whoring (זִנָּה) of the people served to pollute (חָנַף) the land (cf. 23.10, 15). It is highly significant that this adultery was done אֶת הָאֲבֶן וְאֶת הָעֵץ ('with stone and with wood'); אֶרֶץ/אֲבֶן is the same word-pair used in 2.27 as a euphemism for idolatrous divination.⁴⁷⁴ YHWH asks in 5.7 why he should forgive the people for swearing by other gods, since after he provided for them they committed adultery and 'went to the house of the harlot' (וּבֵית זִנָּה יִתְגַּדֵּד). In 13.27 the adulteries of Jerusalem are seen by YHWH together with a litany of other specifically cultic failures, such as abominations (שָׁקֵץ) on the hills (cf. 3.1) and a lack of purity (טָהָר). Because the term is so rooted in cultic critiques found elsewhere in Jeremiah, it is highly likely that it is also a cultic criticism in 23.14.

As a result of the prophets of Jerusalem's adultery and deceit, wicked and evil behaviour in the people is both fostered and encouraged (Jer 23.15). The hands of evildoers are strengthened and no individual turns from his or her own wickedness. These are common criticisms directed against prophets. As a result, YHWH likens the people to Sodom and Gomorrah, one of three references to these cities in Jeremiah (see also 49.18; 50.40).⁴⁷⁵ These texts refer to the narrative in Gen 18.16–19.29 where the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed for their unrighteousness. In these texts, Abraham intercedes on be-

וְהָלַךְ אַחֲרֵי אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא יָדַעְתָּם ('and follow after other gods whom you have not known'). On the one hand, the balance of the verse could be a list of three 'moral' sins followed by three 'cultic' sins. Thus נָאִף should be understood with theft and murder. However, it may be the case that the verse lists out all of the 'cultic' sins with ו, and נָאִף should be understood as a cultic sin together with false oaths, illicit sacrifice and apostasy.

⁴⁷² The lexeme בָּגַד is also used to refer to בְּגֵדֵי יְהוּדָה ('faithless Judah') in Jer 3.8, 11.

⁴⁷³ E.g. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 71 n. 80.

⁴⁷⁴ For this argument, see Wyatt, *Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone*, VT 57 (2007), 483–510.

⁴⁷⁵ Jer 5.1 is reminiscent of the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Gen 18–19, where YHWH declares that even if one were to search the streets and squares of Jerusalem, not a single person who acts justly or seeks the truth would be found. See Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, Harvard Semitic Museum Publications, HSM 64, Winona Lake, IN, 2010, 125–26.

half of the cities in the hope that YHWH will relent; in the end he is unsuccessful, and only Lot and his family are spared.⁴⁷⁶

At the end of the list of accusations in Jer 23.13–14, another word from YHWH is announced על הנבאים ('concerning the prophets') in 23.15. Since we do not have a specific reference in 23.15 to either the prophets of Samaria or of Jerusalem, it is safe to assume that the judgment in 23.15 refers to both groups as it concludes the poetic unit of 23.13–15.

But does Jer 23.15 announce a judgment from YHWH? It is clear that the context is negative; 23.15b criticises the prophets because they have sown חנפה ('pollution') throughout the land—a criticism not too dissimilar from the critique in 23.11. After the introduction of divine speech in 23.15a, YHWH declares that he will make the prophets eat (מאכיל) and drink (והשקתים) noxious substances. The phrasing of the verse sets the terms לענה and ראש in parallel, similar to 8.14, where the phrase וישקנו מי ראש is a judgment due to the people's sin (חטא), as well as 9.14, where the phrase הנני מאכילם את העם הזה shares the same language. It is typical for לענה and ראש to appear together and their meanings are closely related; six of the eight instances of לענה in the Hebrew Bible parallel ראש.⁴⁷⁷ Traditionally, לענה is associated with the plant *artemisia absinthium* and is translated as 'wormwood',⁴⁷⁸ whilst ראש can either refer to a similar kind of plant which is impossible to identify (Deut 29.17; Hos 10.4; Amos 6.12), or something which is bitter (e.g. Deut 32.32) or poisonous, as in the venom of snakes (Deut 32.33; Job 20.16).⁴⁷⁹ We cannot say for certain if the intended effect of the eating and drinking in Jer 23.15 is death by poison, and there is a close similarity between this text and the ritual

⁴⁷⁶ For additional comments on Abraham as an intercessor and YHWH as a judge in the divine council in Gen 18.21, see Jindo, *Biblical Metaphor Reconsidered*, 91.

⁴⁷⁷ See Deut 29.17; Jer 9.14; 23.15; Hos 10.4; Amos 6.12; Lam 3.19; cf. Prov 5.4; Lam 3.15.

⁴⁷⁸ The association between לענה and 'wormwood' is not entirely secure and is likely derived from אֲסִינְתוֹן in ס' (Jer 9.15 [=9.14 מ]; 23.15; Prov 5.4) and *absinthium* in ב (Amos 5.7; Jer 9.14; 23.15; Lam 3.15; Prov 5.4). See, e.g., Dalman II, 318; Löw, *Die Flora der Juden* I/1, Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation 4, Wien, 1926, 386–90. DCH IV, 556; Zorell, 400; DBHE, 394; HALOT I, 533. McKane has marshalled a range of philological data on לענה, especially from ט, ס, פ and צ, but the versions offer only clues about the plant to which לענה refers. McKane, *Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath*, VT 30 (1980), 478–87. An Aramaic cognate is used metaphorically in the phrase *db̄r l'nh* ('a wicked word') in the Deir 'Alla plaster text, combination ii 17 (DNWSI I, 579–80).

⁴⁷⁹ It is likely that ראש II developed the sense of 'poison' secondarily, and its primary sense relates to the bitter extract from an herb or plant. It is used metaphorically in describing a 'bitter' experience (Lam 3.19); in Lam 3.5 it is paralleled with תלאה ('hardship'), in Ps 69.22 with חמץ ('vinegar') and in Deut 32.32 with מררה ('a bitter thing'). See McKane, *Poison, Trial by Ordeal and the Cup of Wrath*, 484–85. DCH VII, 376–77.

in Num 5.⁴⁸⁰ Inducing an oracle by drink is a known phenomenon in the ancient Near East, which least leaves open the possibility that YHWH intends to test the prophets in order to ensure their credentials, so to speak.⁴⁸¹

2.3. Prophets and priests

There is a high degree of semantic overlap between the lexemes *נביא* and *כהן* in Jeremiah.⁴⁸² As priests and prophets are discussed in the book of Jeremiah, their functions and activities overlap as well.⁴⁸³ Criticisms of prophets and priests also draw from similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes. To better understand the relationship between prophet and priest, all of the texts which discuss prophets and priests together are assembled here. They are divided into three basic classes: texts that describe the activity of prophets and priests together (Jer 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.18; 23.11); texts that describe the activity of prophets and priests in parallel with other figures (2.8; 4.9; 18.18; 23.33–34); and texts that list prophets and priest with other figures (2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32).⁴⁸⁴

2.3.1. Jeremiah 5.31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.18; 23.11

In four texts, priests and prophets are referred to as an independent pair. All of the relevant texts, Jer 5.31, 6.13 = 8.10, 14.18 and 23.11, are critical and negatively appraise the activity of prophets and priests.

Jeremiah 5.31

A critique of prophets and priests appears in Jer 5.30–31 in the context of a pair verses which are almost unanimously agreed to be a short, independent piece of poetry. The

⁴⁸⁰ Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 63–64.

⁴⁸¹ Durand, In Vino Veritas, *RA* 76 (1982), 43–50. See also Durand, La religion amorrite en Syrie, in: *Mythologie et religion des sémites occidentaux*, ed. Olmo Lete, OLA 162, Louvain, 2008, 421.

⁴⁸² See my analysis in part I, chapter 2, section 1.3, page 60.

⁴⁸³ Very few studies focus on the priests in Jeremiah, and one of the few to analyse the themes of priesthood and cult in Jeremiah is Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult, in: *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 234. Tiemeyer focuses on the ‘oracular’ material rather than the prose; for reasons which are not explicitly stated, Jer 13.13 is omitted from her study. For another study of the pair, see Plöger, Priester und Prophet, *ZAW* 63 (1951), 157–92.

⁴⁸⁴ All the texts that at least mention prophets and priests together are Jer 2.8, 26; 4.9; 5.31; 6.13; 8.1, 10; 13.13; 14.18; 18.18; 23.11, 33, 34; 26.7, 8, 11, 16; 27.16; 28.1, 5; 29.1, 29; 32.32; 37.3. Texts which have a positive view of priests are Jer 31.14; 33.18, 21. See Tiemeyer, Priests and the Temple Cult.

highly charged words שמה and שערור open 5.30 and set the critical tone of the text (cf. 23.14). A threefold description sets the activity of prophets, priests and people in parallel: הנביאים נבאו בשקר והכהנים ירדו על ידיהם ועמי אהבו כן. In this passage the prophets and priests are primarily criticised for their behaviour, as the people are accused of being complicit in their approval.

The syntax of the phrase נבאו בשקר in Jer 5.31 is the same accusation made against the priest Pashhur in 20.6, who imprisoned Jeremiah after hearing his oracle of doom in 19.14–15. The phrase is also similar to the accusations of prophesying בבעל in 2.8 and 23.13. The similarity of the collocations נבא בשקר and נבא בבעל has led some to suppose that שקר is a euphemism for Ba'al. This interpretation is unlikely, but the act of 'prophesying falsely' and 'prophesying by Ba'al' are criticised for having essentially the same effect. The people are misled when the prophets behave deceitfully and the result is just as serious as the apostasy of Ba'al worship.

The misleading effect of the prophets behaviour is mirrored in the activity of the priests, described with the peculiar phrase ירדו על ידיהם ('they scrape out their hands').⁴⁸⁵ The meaning of this phrase is quite uncertain; it may be an antonym for the technical description of priests 'filling up' their hands, that is, being consecrated as priests (cf. Judg 17.5–12; Ezek 43.26).⁴⁸⁶ Thus, the priests 'scraping out' their hands in Jer 5.31 could have a connotation of 'deconsecration', meaning a disqualification from their service as priests. In this case the phrase would not be a general attack on priests as such; rather the critique points out that the priests' behaviour has the ironic effect of undermining their intended function.

⁴⁸⁵ Two options are usually given: (1) understanding the verb as derived from ירדה I ('rule, direct'), which does not square well with 'on their hands'; or, (2) deriving the verb from ירדה II ('scrape'), as in Judg 14.9 where Samson scrapes honey from a lion's carcass. It is better to understand the verb in Jer 5.31 as deriving from ירדה II. BHS notes in the *apparatus criticus* that two emendations have been proposed for ירדו ('they scrape') both deriving from ירה ('teach, rule'): יורו ('they teach'), as found in, e.g., Condamin, *Jérémie*, 30; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 42. and הורו ('they rule'), as found in, e.g. Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 189–90.

⁴⁸⁶ The phrase יד מלא ('fill the hand') appears twice in the Hebrew Bible, and though the precise meaning of this description is unclear, it does seem to function as a liturgical idiom; this is evident in Ezek 43.26, where the phrase simply describes the consecration of an altar. Holladay, "The Priests Scrape out on Their Hands", *VT* 15 (1965), 112. See also Dahood, *Jeremiah* 5.31, *Bib.* 57 (1976), 106–8.

Jeremiah 6.13 = 8.10b

A criticism levelled against priests and prophets is found in Jer 6.13–15 = 8.10b–12, one of the ‘doublets’ in Jeremiah.⁴⁸⁷ The accusation in 6.13 = 8.10b is directed against the singular ‘priest’ and ‘prophet’ (cf. 23.11). Here a criticism against a general group and a specific one appears in poetic parallelism: as everyone, *מקטנם ועד גדולם* (‘from the least to the greatest’), is greedy, the priest and prophet practice falsehood (*עשה שקר*), literally ‘do falsehood’).

The general criticism of ‘doing falsehood’ in Jer 6.13 = 8.10b is specified in 6.14–15 = 8.11–12. Both priest and prophet are accused of healing (*רפא piel*) the wounds of the people lightly, saying there is well-being (*שלום שלום*) when there is none (cf. 8.15; 14.19).⁴⁸⁸ This behaviour is rejected as shameful (*בוש hiphil*) and abominable (*תועבה*) in 6.15 = 8.12, yet the priests and prophets do not suffer shame. Language related to falling (*נפל*) and stumbling (*כשל*) expresses YHWH’s punishment in 6.15 = 8.12. The only other place where these verbs appear together in Jeremiah is in the oracle against Egypt (46.6, 12, 16).⁴⁸⁹

Jeremiah 14.18

The short and difficult text of Jer 14.18 is found in the context of the ‘drought liturgy’ of 14.1–15.6. The relationship of 14.18 to its surrounding context is unclear. A bleak scene is described in the first half of the verse: in the field lay those slain by the sword (*חללי חרב*), and in the city are those afflicted by famine (*תחלואי רעב*). It is very clear that this is a description of a siege—perhaps the most dominant theme in the book of Jeremiah. Death

⁴⁸⁷ These repetitions in the book are important evidence of the editing process at work in the book’s textual development. On doublets and double readings in Jeremiah, see Janzen, *Double Readings*, *HTR* 60 (1967), 433–47; Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, HSM 6, Cambridge, MA, 1973, 10–25, 91–95; Marx, *A propos des doublets*, in: *Prophecy*, ed. Emerton, BZAW 150, Berlin, 1980, 106–20; Macchi, *Les doublets*, in: *The Book of Jeremiah and Its Reception – Le livre Jérémie et sa réception*, ed. Curtis and Römer, BETL 128, Leuven, 1997, 119–50; Parke-Taylor, *Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*.

⁴⁸⁸ The pair *שלום שלום* appears only in Jer 6.13 = 8.10 (cf. Isa 26.3; 57.19; 1 Chr 12.19). The phrase *אין שלום* is found in 12.12; 30.5 (cf. Isa 48.22; 57.21; Ezek 13.10, 16; Zech 8.10; Ps 38.4; 2 Chr 15.5). There is some similarity between 6.14 = 8.11 and phrases in 8.15 and 14.19. In 8.15, there is a rueful comment that *קוה לשלום ואין טוב* (‘we hoped for well-being but there was no good; for a time of healing, but behold — terror!’). In 14.19 a similar comment is found, as the phrase *קוה לשלום ואין טוב ולעת מרפא והנה בעתה* (‘we hope for well-being but there is no good; and for a time of healing, but behold — terror!’) expresses a similar idea.

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. Isa 3.8; 8.15; 31.3; Ps 27.2; Prov 24.16–17; Dan 11.19. Parke-Taylor, *Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 95.

by violence beyond the security of the city walls, and death by hunger in the walled confines of the city are dire consequences of siege warfare.

The bleak setting of Jer 14.18a is understood as a consequence of the **כי** clause in 14.18. Prophet and priest are mentioned together in the phrase **גם נביא גם כהן** (cf. 23.11). They are said to ‘go around’ the land (**סחר qal**) and yet not ‘know’ (**ידע qal**). This statement is somewhat difficult to understand; 14.18 is the only instance where **סחר qal** takes the preposition **אל**. The sense of the lexeme **סחר qal** pertains to mercantile activity; it indicates ‘trading’ in an economic sense by ‘wandering’ or ‘going about’.⁴⁹⁰ The final phrase **ולא ידעו** (‘and they do not know’) does not offer much help, and it is not clear whether to interpret it as an independent or an adjectival clause. The basic interpretive difference seems to be whether **ולא ידעו** refers to some lack of situational awareness or knowledge while ‘trading’, or whether it refers to a lack of knowledge pertaining to their movement about the land (i.e. they know not *where*).

It is also possible to more explicitly connect **סחר** to the concept of a siege. The phrase **סחרו אל ארץ** does seem to indicate economic activity, basically meaning the prophets and priests ‘go about trading in the land’. They have gone about making acquisitions, and the gist of the criticism is that they have received more than they bargained for. YHWH essentially criticises prophet and priest in 14.18 for unwittingly contributing to the dire military circumstances faced by Jerusalem during the Babylonian siege(s).

Jeremiah 23.11

In the section of the main text under discussion in this chapter (Jer 23.9–15), a criticism of priest and prophet (**גם נביא וגם כהן**) appears in the context of three **כי** clauses in Jer 23.10–11. In the first, the land withers from a curse (**מפני אלה אבלה הארץ**) is said to be full of adulterers (**מנאפים**). Adultery is a criticism associated elsewhere with prophets (23.14). In 23.10 the **מנאפים** which fills the land seems to be understood as a result of the behaviour of the prophet and priest mentioned in 23.11.

The second **כי** clause in Jer 23.10–11 introduces the concept of a drought. A parallelism describes an environmentally sorry state: the land (**ארץ**) is dried up due to a curse

⁴⁹⁰ The verb **סחר qal** has the sense ‘go around’, which refers to the act of going around for the purpose of trade. See Gen 34.10, 21; 42.34. The **qal** verb in Jer 14.18 is the only one listed in DCH which has the meaning of ‘going around’ for reasons other than trade (DCH VI, 144–46). See Gordon, Abraham, *JNES* 17 (1958), 29.

(אלה), and the wild pastureland (נאות מדבר) is withered from drought (יבש).⁴⁹¹ Criticisms against prophets are found in the 'drought liturgy' of 14.1–15.6 as well, so it is not surprising to see the agricultural well-being of the land linked to prophetic activity in 23.11 as well.⁴⁹²

In the succeeding half of Jer 23.10, the pronominal suffixes in the phrase וְתִהְיֶה כֵן מְרוּצָתָם רָעָה וּגְבוּרָתָם לֹא כֵן (‘for their race is evil and their strength is not right’) refer back to the מְנַאֲפִים who fill the land.⁴⁹³ These metaphors of physical activity and strength in 23.10b criticise prophet and priest together. Running is a metaphor used to describe wicked behaviour of the people in 8.6, who are likened to a horse galloping to war,⁴⁹⁴ and the lexeme רוץ *qal* parallels נבא *niphal* in 23.21.

A third כִּי clause appears in Jer 23.11, describing the polluted state of prophet, priest and temple. Two parallel clauses marked with גַּם compare the prophet and priest (גַּם נְבִיאִים) with YHWH’s temple (גַּם בְּבֵיתִי).⁴⁹⁵ The prophet and priest are accused of being polluted (חָנֵף *qal*) and evil is found (מָצָא *qal*) in the temple. חָנֵף *qal* is a *Leitwort* in the oracles against Judah and Israel in 3.1–5 and 3.6–11, where it strongly conveys a negative view of apostasy in terms of sexual deviance.⁴⁹⁶ This verse makes it is apparent that the negative consequences outlined in 23.10 relate to the combination of prophet, priest and temple. They are all held together in the context of a poetic critique. This is also evident from the repetition of the word רָעָה in 23.10–11; the race run by prophet and priest is evil, and ‘their evil’ (רָעָתָם) is found in the temple. The text therefore draws a link between the pollution of the prophet and priest and the evil found in the temple.

Finally, the judgment announced against ‘them’ in Jer 23.12 presumably refers to the prophet and priest in 23.11. YHWH announces that their way will be like ‘slippery places’

⁴⁹¹ The phrase נאות מדבר also appears in the lament in Jer 9.9, and the lexeme יבש (‘be dry’) appears in laments in 12.4; 50.38; 51.36 (cf. Joel 1.19–20; 2.22; Ps 65.13).

⁴⁹² The images of drought in Jer 23.10 also recall the the vision of destruction in 4.23–26, where the destruction of arable lands (הכרמל המדבר) is seen in 4.26, and the phrase מפני יהוה מפני חרון אפו in 4.26 closely mirrors the phrase מפני יהוה מפני דברי קדשו in 23.9. In Jer 4.28 and 12.4 the lexeme ארץ is the subject of the verb אבל *qal* (cf. Isa 24.4; 33.9; Hos 4.3; Joel 1.10; Amos 1.2). In Jer 14.1, Judah mourns because of drought (cf. Hos 3.1–3).

⁴⁹³ The order of the verse here troubles some commentators; e.g., Holladay assesses the text plainly, saying ‘The text of v 10 is in dissaray.’ Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 626.

⁴⁹⁴ For additional instances of מרוצותם, see Jer 8.6; 22.17; cf. 2 Sam 18.27. NB, the phrase לוא כן appears in 8.6 as well.

⁴⁹⁵ As mentioned previously, the identical phrase כִּי גַם נְבִיאִים גַּם כֵּהֵן is found in Jer 14.18.

⁴⁹⁶ See DCH III, 276. The lexeme חָנֵף parallels זָנוּת and רָעָה in Jer 3.2 and נָאֵף in 3.9.

(חלקלקות),⁴⁹⁷ and they will be cast into darkness where they will fall.⁴⁹⁸ These judgments are not unlike others levelled against prophets in Jeremiah (cf. 6.15 = 8.12). Again the word רעה appears, drawing a connection between the punishment and the crime. As YHWH finds evil in his temple, so will he bring evil upon the prophet and priest in judgment.⁴⁹⁹

2.3.2. Jeremiah 2.8; 4.9; 18.18

Three texts describe the activity of prophets and priests in parallel with other members of Israelite leadership.

Jeremiah 2.8

In the context of Jer 2.4–13, several categories of Judaeans are criticised for their failure to follow YHWH properly. A poetic unit in 2.6–8 recounts part of the salvation history of the Exodus event and twice mentions a failure to ask איה יהוה ('where is YHWH?'). Rather than seek after YHWH, the people are accused in 2.7 of defiling (טמא *piel*) the land and making it an abomination (תועבה).

Four groups are specified and criticised in 2.8; all of the accusations have a strongly cultic character. First, YHWH accuses the priests of failing to ask איה יהוה. The phrase appears to be a liturgical formula with no direct parallel in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Isa 63.11–13).⁵⁰⁰ Second, a group identified as תפשי התורה ('guardians of the instruction') are criticised for not knowing YHWH (לא ידעוני). There is little evidence to determine precisely who these people are and whether or not they constitute a distinct group of religious leadership. Third, YHWH accuses הרעים ('the shepherds') of rebelling against YHWH. The

⁴⁹⁷ There could be an alternative meaning חלקלקות II ('darkness') for the occurrence in Ps 35.6 where it is found in conjunction with דרך ('way') and חשך ('darkness'), though חלקלקות I ('smoothness') is possible as well (DCH 3.246). In Jer 23.12 חלקלקות is used with similar terms, both דרך and אפלה ('darkness'), though the sense of חלקלקות I is appropriate enough. The lexeme חלק II ('be smooth') can refer to speech as 'smooth', in the sense of flattery, which explains the sense in Dan 11.21, 34. See Pr 2.16; 7.5; 29.5; Ps 5.10; 28.23; 36.3. There is an additional possibility for חלק, namely that it is related to the Ugaritic verb *hlq* ('perish'), though this meaning here is less likely. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 628.

⁴⁹⁸ The only other instance of the lexeme אפלה in Jeremiah is Jer 2.31, where it appears in the construct ארץ מאפליה ('a land of intense darkness'); the compound suffix of מאפליה is a possessive ך suffix with a feminine ה signalling agreement with the feminine word ארץ. McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 52. See also Exod 10.22; Deut 28.29; Isa 8.22; 59.9; Joel 2.2; Zeph 1.15. Another text in Jeremiah which uses the image of stumbling in darkness as a metaphor for judgment is Jer 13.16.

⁴⁹⁹ The basic combination על הרעה is a typical phrase of judgment; cf. 1 Kgs 14.10; 2 Kgs 21.12; 22.16; Jer 6.19; 11.23; 19.3; 45.5; 2 Chr 34.24.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. also Judg 6.13; 2 Kgs 2.14; Job 35.10. See Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 73–74.

lexeme **פשע** *qal* is typically used in Jeremiah in reference to idolatrous worship practices.⁵⁰¹ Fourth, and finally, the prophets face a twofold accusation of prophesying by Baal (**נבאו בבעל**) and following after useless things (**אחרי לא יועלו הלכו**).⁵⁰²

Jeremiah 4.9

Prophets are mentioned in Jer 4.9–12, a set of verses in the context of oracles concerning attacks from foreign enemies in 4.1–8 and 4.13–17.⁵⁰³ The two phrases **והיה ביום ההוא** ('and in that day')⁵⁰⁴ and **בעת ההיא** ('at that time') parallel one another and frame 4.9–10 and 4.11–12 respectively.⁵⁰⁵ In 4.9 there is an oracle of doom concerning the Judaeen leadership. Three parallel statements describe states of shock and dismay among these leaders. The verb **אבד** *qal* describes the state of the **לב המלך ולב השרים**, indicating a state of mental dismay or a loss of nerve. The priests are then described as 'appalled' (**שמים** *niphal*) and the prophets as 'astounded' (**תמה** *qal*). All of these descriptions point to deep distress and mental anguish.

A shift occurs in Jer 4.10 where YHWH is accused of deceiving (**נשא** *hiphil*) the people and Jerusalem. With the particle **אכן** and the complementary infinitive absolute **השא**, the phrase is emphatic.⁵⁰⁶ Presumably Jeremiah makes this accusation against YHWH, as the first person verb **ואמר** and the exclamation **אהה אדני יהוה** introduce speech by the prophet (cf. 1.16; 14.13; 32.31–32).⁵⁰⁷ Jer 4.10 is one of several texts in the Hebrew Bible to address the thorny issue of divine deceit (cf. 1 Kgs 22.19–23; Ezek 14.6–11).⁵⁰⁸ YHWH deceives the people by means of the leadership in 4.9, who are unaware as they say **שלום יהיה לכם** (cf. 23.17). In this passage, then, the prophets are both the object and

⁵⁰¹ See Jer 2.29; 3.13; 5.6; 33.8.

⁵⁰² Compare the similar accusation made against the Judaeen ancestors, **ילכו אחרי ההבל ויהבלו** in Jer 2.5.

⁵⁰³ See Jer 1.13–15; 4.19–21; 4.29–31; 5.15–17; 6.1–5; 6.22–26. On the enemy from the north, see, e.g., Childs, *Enemy from the North*; Reimer, *Foe* and the 'North'.

⁵⁰⁴ Similar statements are used in oracles of doom in Jer 25.33; 48.41; 49.22, 26; 50.30 (cf. 39.16–17). Duhm believed this to signal a distant future, but it is equally likely that this would refer to more contemporary events. Duhm, *Jeremia*, 49. In contrast, see Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 34.

⁵⁰⁵ Pace Schmidt, *Jeremia* 1–20, 128.

⁵⁰⁶ For **אכן**, see HALOT I, 47. On the intensifying use of the infinitive absolute, see IBHS §35.3.1.

⁵⁰⁷ Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 215.

⁵⁰⁸ Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 34. On the Micaiah ben Imlah passage, see Kelly, *Prophets, Kings and Honour*, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Stories*, ed. Becking and Barstad, OTS 65, Leiden, 2015, 64–75.

the instigators of an act of deception; this adds some variation to the many accusations of deceit (שקר) made against prophets in Jeremiah (e.g. 5.12–14; 14.11–16).⁵⁰⁹

There is no claim here that the prophets, in concert with the perspectives of the king, officials and priests, were not authorised to say שלום יהיה לכם (cf. Jer 23.17). Rather YHWH is held accountable for what his authorised representatives are saying. The claim made in 4.9–10 is that these leaders do not understand that the stakes cannot be more desperate and pressing—a blade pressed against the throat (נגעה חרב על הנפש). Their utter dismay and shock will therefore be all the more severe.

Jeremiah 18.18

Another text which deals with various leaders including priests and prophets is Jer 18.18, a short accusation against Jeremiah in the context of 18.18–23.⁵¹⁰ The accusation in 18.18 provides the context for the prayer that follows it in 18.19–23; while others wish to disregard (קשב *hiphil*) Jeremiah's words in 18.18, Jeremiah pleads to YHWH to hear his case (קשב *hiphil*) in 18.19.⁵¹¹ The unspecified opponents of Jeremiah are said to devise a plan against him,⁵¹² where they will 'strike him with the tongue' (נכהו בלשון) and disregard (אל נקשיבה) his words.

⁵⁰⁹ According to Carroll, Jer 4.10 shows independence from other material in the book critical of the prophets, as 'the theology of 4.10 appears to play no part in the attack on the prophets in 23.9–40; 27–29.' Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 162. For the view that the passage is late, with 14.13 and 23.17 dependent on it, see Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 187.

⁵¹⁰ The textual boundaries of 18.18–23 are clear, as the context shifts from an oracle of doom in 18.13–17 to a report of an accusation against Jeremiah in 18.18 by an unspecified group of individuals. The text is unclear on who is in the group accusing Jeremiah; a plot (חשב) against the prophet is mentioned in 11.19 (cf. 11.18–23), but there is little direct connection to 18.18. All we can say is that the threat to Jeremiah's life in 18.22–23 bears close resemblance to the threat posed by the 'conspirators' and men of Anathoth in 11.19–23. See Maier, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora*, FRLANT 196, Göttingen, 2002, 307. A series of texts share the theme of the prophet's vulnerability: he will be attacked by kings, officers, priests and the people (1.18–19); he is taunted for YHWH's word failing to appear (17.15; cf. Jer 28.8–9; Deut 18.22; Isa 14.24; 46.11.); he is surrounded by those wishing to inform (נגד) against him in a legal prosecution and exact vengeance (20.10); he is to die for sedition (26.11) and damaging morale (38.4); he is threatened with imprisonment (29.24–28; 36.26) and beaten and detained (37.15, 21; 38.28); he is trapped in a muddy pit (38.6). The prophet is also accused of lowering the morale of Judaeans soldiers by giving oracles of doom, and is threatened with death (38.4). On this theme, see Biddle, *Polyphony and Symphony*, Studies in Old Testament Interpretation 2, Macon, GA, 1996, 83.

⁵¹¹ McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 435.

⁵¹² The verb חשב is repeated in the phrase נחשבה על ירמיהו מחשבות in Jer 18.18, literally meaning something like 'let us plan a plan'. Cf. the phrase חשבו מחשבות ('for they made plans against me') in 11.19.

These unnamed opponents cite their reasons for the plan against Jeremiah. They believe that the basic functions of religious specialists will not fail (אבד *qal*). תורה ('instruction') will not fail from the priest, nor will עצה ('counsel') fail from the wise man, nor will דבר ('word') fail from the prophet. To them, Jeremiah's words contradict these views.⁵¹³ Most of the interpretation of Jer 18.18 tends to wonder whether the figures listed here represent a series of distinct professional classes.⁵¹⁴ Most assume this is true of the terms נביא and כהן, so the question becomes whether or not חכם ('wise man') functions the same way in Jeremiah.⁵¹⁵

The question of 'professional classes' seems to rest in part on a view that understands the responsibilities of the individuals listed in Jer 18.18 as technical terms. So, in this view, תורה is a reference to the written, legal corpus which is the responsibility of the priest;⁵¹⁶ עצה has a strongly 'political' character appropriate for high-ranking administrators;⁵¹⁷ similarly, דבר refers to the official prophetic *Offenbarung*.⁵¹⁸ To be clear, these are not unimportant issues. However, the general nature of the list and its clear use of parallelism should not be overlooked; each 'group' is referred to without much specification, and each lexeme associated with them refers to their general area of activity. The three lexemes תורה ('instruction'), עצה ('counsel') and דבר ('word'), in the most basic terms, re-

⁵¹³ For Schmidt, these opponents, representing central sectors of Judaeen society, 'verbindet nicht nur persönliche Feindschaft gegen Jeremia' but rather 'bilden selbst Autoritäten, die auf Grund der für sie weiterhin gültigen Tradition von anderen Grundvoraussetzungen ausgehen, nicht Jeremias kritische Einsicht in die Situation teilen.' Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 321.

⁵¹⁴ Some are skeptical of the conclusion that these three terms represent distinct political or professional classes. See Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, BZAW 135, Berlin, 1974, 21–31. Others think that these groups are generally reflective of Judaeen leadership. See Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias*, 99–103. Jer 18.18 has close parallels to Ezek 7.26b, a verse most commentators view as influenced by Jer 18.18. Whybray, *Intellectual Tradition*, 27–28; Bezzel, *Konfessionen Jeremias*, BZAW 378, Berlin, 2007, 202–06.

⁵¹⁵ See, e.g., Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 152–80. There are some instances where חכם seems to refer to a particular group: in Jer 8.8 it appears that scribes are identified as חכמים as their wisdom is criticised (חכמת מה להם); the שר ('ruler') and חכם of Babylon parallel one another in 50.35, and the חכם is listed together with שר, פחה ('governor'), סגן ('prefect') and גבור ('strong man') in 51.57. However, other texts use חכם more generally: YHWH is praised as unique, as none like him can be found בכל חכמי הגוים ('among all the wise of the nations') or בכל מלכותם ('among all their kingdoms') in 10.7; or contrast the wise with the גבור ('strong man') and עשיר ('rich man') in a more general sense in 9.22.

⁵¹⁶ Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 826–27. There are 11 occurrences of the lexeme תורה in Jeremiah: 2.8; 6.19; 8.8; 9.12; 16.11; 18.18; 26.4; 31.33; 32.23; 44.10; 44.23. Jer 2.8; 8.8; 18.18 are typically isolated as 'authentic' or non-deuteronomistic instances; see García López, תורה, ThWAT VIII (1995), 614–15.

⁵¹⁷ McKane, *Prophets and Wise Men*, SBT 44, London, 1965, 42–43; Ruppert, יעץ, ThWAT III (1982), 728.

⁵¹⁸ In this instance Maier cites Grether's classification of דבר יהוה as a *terminus technicus* für die prophetische Wortoffenbarung, though here we have only דבר. Grether, *Name und Wort Gottes*, BZAW 64, Giessen, 1934, 76; Maier, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora*, 308.

late to similar kinds of speech.⁵¹⁹ In this context they have a similar semantic range related to understanding and following the divine will. Thus, the three groups are understood as engaged in broadly similar behaviour, giving advice and instruction in line with the will of YHWH.

Jeremiah 23.33–34

In the opening verses of Jer 23.33–40, prophets and priests are mentioned together and are described as engaged in similar behaviour. They, along with *העם הזה*, are depicted as asking (*שאל qal*) about or repeating the phrase (*אמר qal*) the ‘speech of YHWH’ (23.33–34).⁵²⁰ There is little distinction made in 23.33–40 whether the question *מה משא יהוה* (‘what is the burden of YHWH?’) comes from the people, a prophet or a priest. In response, the prophet (presumably?) is instructed to respond with a negative statement punning the form of the question: *נטשתי אתכם* (‘I will cast you off’). Using this particular phrase results in being ‘cast off’ (*נטש*) like a ‘burden’ (*משא*).

In 23.34 YHWH declares that he will punish (*פקד*) the prophet, priest or people who says *משא יהוה*. Rather than ask *מה משא יהוה*, the people are encouraged to speak to one another concerning *מה ענה יהוה* (‘what has YHWH answered?’) or *מה דבר יהוה* (‘what has YHWH said?’). In these phrases the conceptual framework is essentially the same as asking about the *משא יהוה*. All of them refer to the same process of inquiry, with differences only regarding the terminology, and prophets and priests are engaged in the same activity.

2.3.3. Jeremiah 2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32

Priests and prophets are mentioned together as a pair in four critical texts which describe YHWH’s judgment against the leaders of Israel and Judah (Jer 2.26; 8.1; 13.13; 32.32). The shared instances of the items in these lists can be illustrated as follows:

⁵¹⁹ Maier understands these three terms ‘als mündliche Übermittlung eines Gottesbescheides oder als mündliche Unterweisung im Rahmen der Erziehung’. Maier, *Jeremia als Lehrer der Tora*, 308.

⁵²⁰ Traditionally the phrase *משא יהוה*, repeated throughout Jer 23.33–40, has been translated as ‘the burden of YHWH’. The sense of the passage is far clearer if instead one reads ‘oracle of YHWH’, following Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, SBLMS 23, Missoula, MT, 1977, 27–33. The term is now understood as a term for a prophetic oracle; see, e.g., Boda, *Freeing the Burden of Prophecy*, *Bib.* 87 (2006), 338–57. NB, to differentiate the phrases *יהוה נאם* and *משא יהוה* in the present work, I translate *משא יהוה* as ‘message of YHWH’. I comment further on this passage later on in this chapter in section 5.1, page 155. On *שאל* and divine consultation in Jer 23.33–40, see Thelle, *Ask God*, 186–89.

	king	official	priest	prophets	'people'
Jer 2.26	מלכיהם	שריהם	כהניהם	נביאיהם	
Jer 8.1	מלכי יהודה	שריו	כהנים	נביאים	ישבי ירושלים
Jer 13.13	מלכים		כהנים	נביאים	ישבי הארץ ישבי ירושלים
Jer 32.32	מלכיהם	שריהם	כהניהם	נביאיהם	איש יהודה ישבי ירושלים

In 2.26 these figures are listed as members of the *בית ישראל* and in 32.32 the figures are included within the categories of both *בני ישראל* and *בני יהודה*. An added detail in 13.13 specifies the kings as those *הישיבים לדוד על כסאו* ('sitting on the throne of David'). In each instance, priests and prophets are mentioned together as a pair.

Jer 2.26–28 is a small unit of poetry found in the larger setting of 2.20–28. In this context YHWH is critical of Israel's idolatrous practices.⁵²¹ In 2.26 the leaders are singled out for critique, and in 2.27 YHWH accuses them of illicit divinatory practices with *עץ* ('wood') and *אבן* ('stone').⁵²² The religious language uses these kinship terms as a 'confession' and a cry for assistance (cf. 11.12).⁵²³

In the context of Jer 7.1–8.3, the criticism against is strongly associated with the various alleged cultic and moral failures of the Jerusalem temple. A small unit in 8.1–3 describes one aspect of YHWH's judgment directed against various leaders of Judah, including the prophets and the priests. Desecrating the remains of the dead is a deeply religious phenomenon and in this setting it is explicitly connected to astral worship. Because the

⁵²¹ The parallel terms *עץ* and *אבן* most likely are cultic objects with associations to divine figures; see Hadley, *Cult of Asherah*, UCOP 57, Cambridge, 2000, 4–11; Wyatt, *Word of Tree and Whisper of Stone*. Many associate *עץ* in this context with Asherah; see, e.g., Smith, *Early History of God*, San Francisco, CA, 1990, 81–85; Binger, *Asherah*, JSOTS 232, Copenhagen International Seminar 2, Sheffield, 1997, 129–40; Wiggins, *Asherahs and Trees*, JANER 1 (2001), 158–87.

⁵²² Tiemeyer, *Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?*, in: *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 264–68. There is an element of satire in the kinship terms here: the wooden object, typically representing a female deity, is called father (*אבי אתה*), and the stone, typically representing the male deity, is described as giving birth (*ילדתני* Q). As a rejection of gods other than YHWH, this 'polemical distortion' is 'in keeping with Deuteronomistic ideology' Olyan, *Cultic Confessions*, ZAW 99 (1987), 255, 258–59; Fischer, *Jeremiah* 1–25, 170–71.

⁵²³ The two key terms *קומה* ('arise') and *הושיענו* ('save us') in Jer 2.27 are calls for help that are found throughout the Hebrew Bible. YHWH is called upon to rise up (*קום*) for various purposes on behalf of others: to defend his people (Isa 2.19–21; 14.22; 26.21; 33.10; Ps 3.8; 9.20; 10.12; 12.6; 17.13; 74.22; 76.10; 82.8; 102.14; Job 31.14); to move against his people's enemies in war or judgment (Num 10.35; Isa 14.22; 28.21; 31.2; Am 7.9; Ps 7.7; 35.2; 44.27; 68.2; cf. Isa 33.10); to confirm or complete his stated purposes, or keep a vow (Isa 44.26; cf. Jer 10.20; 28.6; 29.10; 30.24; 33.14).

Judaean leadership loved (אהב *qal*), served (עבד *qal*), sought (דרש *qal*) and worshipped (חזה *hishtaphel*) the sun, moon and all the host of heaven (cf. Deut 4.19; 17.13; 2 Kgs 23.5), their bones will be exposed on the ground before them. In consequence for their idolatry, YHWH will scatter their bones on the ground like faeces.

A short statement sets the theme of Jer 13.12–14, as YHWH says that every jar will be filled with wine (כל נבל ימלא יין). The text assumes its audience already is familiar with this saying, as they claim, ‘Don’t we already know?’ YHWH’s response is strident: he will judge all the inhabitants of the land, fill them with drunkenness (שכרון),⁵²⁴ and shatter them against each other without relenting. Priests and prophets are included in the classes of leaders singled out in 13.13. Along with all of the inhabitants of the land, YHWH will destroy them.

In a long speech in Jer 32.26–44, YHWH details his rationale for judging Jerusalem and giving it over to the Babylonians. Priests and prophets are listed with other leaders in 32.32 (cf. 11.17). The general accusation of ‘doing evil’ (עשה רעה) is made against the leadership in 32.34–35. YHWH accuses the people of Israel and Judah of defiling (טמא *piel*) his temple with their abominations (שקוציהם), and building shrines for Ba‘al in the Ben Hinnom valley to make child sacrifices to Molech (cf. 7.31; 19.5).⁵²⁵ For this abomination (תועבה), which YHWH never commanded the people to do, the people are defiled as well (טמא *hiphil*).

2.4. Summary

In the first text unit of Jer 23.9–40, the criticisms against prophets and priests in 23.9–15 have a strongly cultic character and use the language of lament. It is not necessary to read the expressions of distress and despair in 23.9 as biographical;⁵²⁶ the rhetorical force of the language does not depend on the prophet’s strong feelings or personal concerns. Their force comes from basic expectations prophets. In the criticisms outlined in the following verses, the expectation is that prophetic speech should uphold certain cultic obligations.

⁵²⁴ The nominal form שכרון only appears in Jer 13.13. In 23.9 is found the only occurrence of the lexeme שכור (‘drunk’) in the book. See DCH VIII, 349. In all cases שכור has negative overtones; see my comments in note 458 on page 116.

⁵²⁵ See Watson, Hinnom Valley, ABD III (1992), 202–3; Heider, Molech מלך, DDD. On the close association between these sacrifices and the Tophet, see Stavrakopoulou, Jerusalem Tophet, SELVOA 29/30 (2012), 137–58.

⁵²⁶ Cf. Fischer, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 690; Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 70–71.

Thus, the adultery (נאף) and pollution (חנף) of the prophets and priests is not a contrast of moral standards with Jeremiah;⁵²⁷ they reflect general expectations of prophetic speech. The implicit assumption is that they have failed in their expected function.⁵²⁸

Some of the results of the semantic analysis in this study's first part become especially pertinent in Jer 23.9–15. Prophets and priests criticised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes. These features of the text, together with the semantics of the lexeme נביא, do not suggest a sharp dichotomy between prophets and priests.⁵²⁹ There is a high degree of semantic overlap between the lexemes נביא and כהן in Jeremiah. As priests and prophets are discussed in the book of Jeremiah, their functions and activities overlap as well, as is demonstrated in the criticisms laid against them. My reading of these references to prophets and priests together confirms the view that they are closely related.⁵³⁰ They are collaborative partners responsible for the sins and troubles Jeremiah observes in the land.⁵³¹

3. Jeremiah 23.16–24

An introduction of divine speech in Jer 23.16 opens a section of text in 23.16–22. Where 23.9–12 and 23.13–15 discussed the misdeeds of prophets and priests together, in 23.16–22 the priests are absent and attention falls squarely on the prophets. However, the prophets are not addressed directly as with על הנבאים in 23.15. Instead YHWH warns an unspecified audience against listening to the messages delivered by the prophets (23.16, 21).

3.1. Text and translation

(16) כה־אמר יהוה צבאות אל תשמעו על דברי הנבאים הנבאים לכם⁵³² מהבליים המה
אתכם חזון לבם ידברו לא מפי יהוה

⁵²⁷ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 71 n. 80.

⁵²⁸ Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer, *Priests and the Temple Cult*, 256–57.

⁵²⁹ See also Tiemeyer, *Priests and the Temple Cult*, 234.

⁵³⁰ See, e.g., Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets*, Uppsala, 1945; Tilson, *False Prophets in the Old Testament*, 427; Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 286–95; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 112–13.

⁵³¹ Carroll, *Whose Prophet?*, 37.

⁵³² BHS deletes the phrase הנבאים לכם on account of its absence in 6*. However, a nominal form of נביא followed by a *niphal* participle נביאים is rather typical in the book; see, e.g., Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25, 26; 27.15. See also the similar phrase הנבאים האמרים אליכם in Jer 27.14. Because the phrase is typical, I think that הנבאים לכם should be retained here.

- (17) אמרים אמור⁵³³ למנאצי דבר⁵³⁴ יהוה שלום יהיה לכם וכל הלך בשררות לבו אמרו⁵³⁵ לא תבוא עליכם רעה
- (18) כי מי עמד בסוד יהוה וירא⁵³⁶ וישמע את דברו מי הקשיב דברי⁵³⁷ וישמע⁵³⁸
- (19) הנה סערת יהוה חמה יצאה וסער⁵³⁹ מתחולל על ראש רשעים יחול
- (20) לא ישוב אף יהוה עד עשתו ועד הקימו מזמות לבו באחרית הימים תתבוננו בה בינה
- (21) לא שלחתי את הנבאים והם רצו לא דברתי אליהם והם נבאו
- (22) ואם עמדו בסודי וישמעו דברי את עמי וישבום מדרכם הרע ומרע מעלליהם
- (23) האלהי מקרב אני נאם יהוה ולא אלהי מרחק

⁵³³ BHS deletes the infinitive absolute *אָמור* on account of its absence from the versions. On the one hand, there are few similar combinations of a participle with the infinitive absolute. The only comparable instances are *נָגַף נָגַף* in Jdg 20.39 and *עָטָה עָטָה* in Isa 22.17. Joosten, *Verbal System of Biblical Hebrew*, 237 n. 324. On the other hand, doubled uses of *אמר* before direct discourse are quite normal; see Exod 21.5; 1 Sam 2.30; Ezek 28.9; cf. 1 Sam 20.21. See Meier, *Speaking of Speaking*, 69–70. I do not find it necessary to delete *אמור*.

⁵³⁴ BHS reads *למנאצי דבר* ('to those who despise the word [of YHWH]') in place of *למנאצי דבר* ('to those who despise me, saying'). The *apparatus criticus* cites *ὁ τοῖς ἀπὸ μὲν τοῦ λόγου τοῦ κυρίου* in support of this reading (cf. Ⓢ). The phrase *יהוה דבר* is unusual, as here it introduces divine speech, as in 'YHWH has said', which is related by the *נביאים* in 23.16. Commentators have struggled with the phrase as well. Regarding this use in Jer 23.35, 37 Barthélemy et al. believe 'l'authenticité est incertaine' (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 643). McKane notes that the context of 23.16–22 is direct address, where *למנאצי* makes better sense. McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 577. I read L without emendation.

⁵³⁵ BHS notes the absence of *אמרו* from Ⓢ^{Ms} and proposes deleting it. In my view, *אמרו* should be retained. The verbs *אמרים אמור* in 23.17a and *אמרו* set the messages of the *נביאים* in parallel. They provide reassurance to YHWH's despisers and to those who follow their own will.

⁵³⁶ BHS suggests reading *ויראהו* in place of *וירא*, thus adding a 3ms suffix to the verb. The suffix would presumably refer to YHWH and not his word, since *את דברו* already functions as the direct object for both *וירא* and *וישמע*. Various evidence from the versions is cited in the *apparatus criticus*, though only Ⓢ adds a suffix to the verb (*whzyhy*). The difficulty in L is not grammatical, but it has to do with *דברו* being both 'seen' (*ירא*) and 'heard' (*שמע*). Cf. *הדור אתם ראו דבר יהוה* (Jer 2.31), a phrase BHS deletes as an *additamentum lectoris*, apparently for similar reasons; see McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 51–52. I prefer to retain L and not to add a suffix to *וירא*. See main text for comment on *דבר*.

⁵³⁷ *דברו*, Q, *דברי* K. The vocalisation of L also suggests a Masoretic preference for a 3ms suffix. BHS prefers Q, but Barthélemy et al. say the 1cs suffix 'constitue une lectio difficilior' (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 644). I follow Q and read *דברו*, which matches the phrases *וישמע את דברו* and *הקשיב דברו*.

⁵³⁸ BHS reads the *hiphil* *וישמע* for *qal* *וישמע* and cites Jer 23.22 in support. Many others follow this suggestion; e.g., Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*, 131; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 152; Weiser, *Jeremia* 1–25, 14, 8. Auflage, ATD 20, Göttingen, 1981, 205–06. Context, however, for the two verbs is key. The *hiphil* plural *וישמעו* in 23.22 parallels another *hiphil* plural verb *וישבום* with a 3mp suffix. The *qal* singular *וישמע* in 23.18 parallels a *hiphil* singular verb *הקשיב*. The context of 23.22 is proclaiming a message while in 23.18 it is attending to a message. In my view, the reading in BHS does not attend to this context, and *וישמע* in 23.18 should be retained. See also McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 581.

⁵³⁹ BHS reads *סער* instead of *וסער* as in the parallel text of Jer 30.23. The *apparatus criticus* deletes the *ו* because *חמה* is considered secondary (*additamentum*), both here and in 30.23. However, the combination of *יצא* and *חמה* is unique to Jeremiah; see 4.4 = 21.12; Parke-Taylor, *Formation of the Book of Jeremiah*, 87. If *חמה* is retained then the phrase *וסער מתחולל* ('and a whirling storm') elaborates the phrase *חמה יצאה* ('fury goes forth'). The *ו* then has an epexegetical function; see IBHS §39.2.4. Thus I read L in this way and do not support emending the text here.

אם יסתר איש במסתרים ואני לא אראנו נאם יהוה הלוא את השמים ואת הארץ (24)
אני מלא נאם יהוה

- (16) Thus says YHWH of Hosts, do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with emptiness; they speak a vision of their own hearts, not from the mouth of YHWH.
- (17) They declare to those who despise me, YHWH has said, you will be safe; and [to]⁵⁴⁰ all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, No disaster shall befall you.
- (18) For who has stood in the council of YHWH and seen and heard his word? Who has heeded his word and heard?
- (19) Behold the storm of YHWH, wrath goes forth, a whirling storm;⁵⁴¹ it will whirl down upon the head of the wicked.
- (20) The anger of YHWH will not return until it has made and established the purposes of his heart; in time to come you will fully understand.
- (21) I did not send the prophets, but they ran; I did not speak to them, but they prophesied.
- (22) But if they had stood in my council, and had proclaimed my words to my people, they would make them turn back from their evil ways and evil deeds.
- (23) Am I a close god, oracle of YHWH,⁵⁴² and not a distant god?
- (24) If a man hides in secret,⁵⁴³ do I not see him, oracle of YHWH? Do I not fill the heavens and the earth, oracle of YHWH?

3.2. It will (not) go well for you

A series of criticisms directed against prophets in Jer 23.16–17 associate their words with delusional visions. YHWH rejects their speech as he claims it is a vision of their own hearts (חזון לבם) rather than from his mouth. This vision is associated with their twofold message of well-being: ‘it will go well for you’ (שלום יהיה לכם) and ‘disaster will not come upon you’ (לא תבוא עליכם רעה).

Jer 23.16 begins with a warning not to listen (אל תשמעו) to the words of the prophets, but it is not immediately clear who is being instructed. In contrast to other instruc-

⁵⁴⁰ One expects to have ולכל here, a reading which, according to McKane is ‘an emendation which is grammatically necessary’. McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 577.

⁵⁴¹ Here I read the ו in the phrase וסער מתחולל as epexegetical.

⁵⁴² See Barthélemy et al. and their view of 23.23, 24; 31.16, 17; 48.38; 49.5, 31, 37; 51.25. ‘Considérant qu’en ces cas l’ajoute ou l’omission de cette expression constitue une initiative d’ordre littéraire’ (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 645.).

⁵⁴³ Here I have translated במסתרים as a plural of abstraction, see Joüon-Muraoka §136g (cf. §136j).

tions not to heed the prophets, this audience is told not to heed the *words* of the prophets. These words only serve to fill their audience with emptiness, a process described by the *hiphil* participle מהבלים.⁵⁴⁴ The meaning of the lexeme הבל is famously difficult to translate and it is infrequently used in Jeremiah. Its only other occurrence in the book comes in Jer 2.5, where Israel and Judah's fathers followed after הבל with the result that they became like הבל.⁵⁴⁵ In this context הבל should be understood as a reference to idolatry and a failure to follow YHWH. This sense is also appropriate for 23.17, where the prophets are accused of misleading the people away from YHWH's will.

Both prophets and their audiences are criticised in Jer 23.17. To those who despise (שלום יהיה לכם) YHWH, the prophets share a positive message from him (נאץ piel) YHWH, the prophets share a positive message from him (שלום יהיה לכם). This same message appears in 4.10, where Jeremiah accuses YHWH of deceiving the people with the same assurance of well-being (cf. 6.14 = 8.11; 14.13). To those who follow the will of their own hearts (כל הלך בשררות לבו),⁵⁴⁶ the prophets provide assurances that disaster will not come upon them (לא תבוא עליכם רעה). This word contrasts with YHWH's judgment announced against the prophets in 23.12 (5.12).⁵⁴⁷ Both of the 'quotations' from the prophets in 23.17 are quite general and do not offer much by way of specifics. Instead, they look like responses to specific questions: 'Will it go well?' and 'Will we see disaster?' If this is the case, then it is positive answers of support and encouragement that are criticised, not the prophets who give them per se. They delude and mislead because they do not come from YHWH and because they are given to the wrong people.

It is later in the pericope where we find critiques of prophets which closely resemble those found elsewhere in the book. A poetic parallelism relates the lexemes נבא *niphal* and רץ *qal* to one another. YHWH did not send (שלח qal) the prophets, but they ran, and YHWH did not speak (דבר piel) to the prophets, but they prophesied. Running is a metaphor used to describe wicked behaviour (cf. 8.6), and adulterers (מנאפים) who are criticised because of their evil race (מרוצתם רעה) in 23.10.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ This form of הבל is only found here in the Hebrew Bible.

⁵⁴⁵ Verb forms of הבל are rare in the Hebrew Bible, and qal forms of הבל are found only in Jer 2.5; Ps 62.11; Job 27.12.

⁵⁴⁶ The phrase שרירות הלב ('obstinacy of the heart') is used to describe the people in Jer 3.17; 7.24; 9.13; 11.8; 13.10; 16.12; 18.12; 23.17).

⁵⁴⁷ A group which apparently includes prophets says essentially the same thing; cf. לא תבוא עלינו רעה in Jer 5.12.

⁵⁴⁸ See my comments on page 126 and in note 494..

A text which appears to be a vision report then directly contrasts with the חזון ('vision') of the prophets in Jer 23.16, as YHWH's judgment is described with the metaphor of a whirling storm (סער) crashing down on the head of the wicked (Jer 23.19–20 = 30.23–24). Where the text presented YHWH's speech in the first person in 23.16–17, 21, in these verses he is referenced in third person. Language related to winds and storms are often associated with YHWH's anger and wrath (cf. 25.32). Here in 23.19 the fury of YHWH is directed against the רשעים ('wicked'), a designation used in reference to parts of the population in Judah (cf. 5.26; 12.1; 25.31). As a vision report, the language in 23.19–20 = 30.23–24 resembles 4.23–26. In that text YHWH's fiery anger (חרון אפו) is the cause of natural destruction, where earth, sky, mountains, hills and pastures are ruined and made desolate by YHWH.

YHWH's anger is unrelenting and will not turn back until it completes its purposes. The description of YHWH's anger (אף יהוה) in Jer 23.20 parallels YHWH's storm (סערה יהוה) in 23.19. Both verses signal YHWH's judgment with references to wrath (חמה) and anger (אף). This judgment will not turn back (שוב), implicitly just like the people will not turn back from their wickedness. In 23.20a = 30.23a, YHWH's anger is understood as satisfying his plans and expectations, as it will not turn back until it has done (עשה *qal*) and established (קום *hiphil*) his will. The lexeme מזמות ('purposes') is uncommon in Jeremiah; it is used once to describe the wicked plans of YHWH's 'beloved' (ידיד) in 11.15, and once to describe YHWH's intent to destroy Babylon in 51.11.

In the comment which concludes 23.20, YHWH tells his audience that they will understand in future times (באחרית הימים תתנוגנו בה בינה). Some read this statement as an indication that prophetic oracles were expected to be fulfilled, but here the words of the prophets are not at issue; rather the statement suggests that understanding (בינה) will be available only 'after the fact'. In the words of Fox, '[t]hrough *binah* Israel will know how to read the meaning in events.'⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁹ Fox, Words for Wisdom, ZAH 6 (1993), 155.

3.3. Prophets and the council of YHWH

The well-known concept of the divine council appears in Jer 23.18, 22.⁵⁵⁰ While this particular construct סוד יהוה ('council of YHWH') is found sparingly (Jer 23.18, 22; Ps 25.14), it is widely agreed that it is a part of a wider range of terminology related to the concept of the heavenly assembly.⁵⁵¹ The lexeme סוד can refer to a small collective or group of individuals, advice or plans; in the present context, it describes the setting in which plans are made.⁵⁵² Standing in the divine council is a description of intermediation and communication between deity and diviner; one who has access to divine knowledge is able to provide sound advice in the face of uncertainty.⁵⁵³ Previously, the opening question of the verse in Jer 23.18 was thought to be rhetorical, essentially claiming that no one has direct access to YHWH's plans. Especially after an important study by Nissinen, it is now recognised that an 'essential prerequisite of prophecy' involved being present in the divine council.⁵⁵⁴

There has been disagreement among scholars over the connotations of Jer 23.18. The opening question, מי עמד בסוד יהוה, is a critical assessment of the prophets generally in 23.16–22; they should not be heeded because, though they should have, they have not stood in the סוד of YHWH. The prophets are expected to stand in YHWH's council and make his words known to his people (Jer 23.22; cf. 23.18). By doing so they would cause the

⁵⁵⁰ Mullen considered the Israelite tradition to represent a 'radical break with all other council traditions in the ancient Near East.' Mullen, *Divine Council*, HSM 24, Chico, CA, 1980, 283. However, as Nissinen pointed out, he made this statement without the help of more recently published sources. Now it is assumed that the Hebrew tradition largely conformed to the ancient Near Eastern pattern and it is a *communio opinionis* that prophets were understood by their societies to participate in the divine council. Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*, in: *Kein Land für sich allein*, ed. Hübner and Knauf, OBO 186, Göttingen, 2002, 4–19. Among important studies which should be mentioned are Wheeler Robinson, *The Council of Yahweh*, *JTS* 45 (1944), 151–57; Cross, *Council of Yahweh*, *JNES* 12 (1953), 274–77; Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, *BZAW* 190, Berlin, 1990, 71–94; Neef, *Gottes himmlischer Thronrat*, *AzTh* 79, Stuttgart, 1994. Cf. McKane, who simply translates סוד here as 'secrets'. McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 582–83.

⁵⁵¹ See Fabry, סוד, *ThWAT* V (1986), 775–82.

⁵⁵² Fabry, סוד, *ThWAT* V, 777; Gordon, *Standing in the Council*, in: *The God of Israel*, ed. Gordon, UCOP 64, Cambridge, 2007, 193.

⁵⁵³ Nissinen, *Prophecy and Omen Divination*, 345–46.

⁵⁵⁴ Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*, 17. Stökl qualifies this claim somewhat, arguing that evidence for the Old Babylonian period is sketchy at best. See Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26. Mullen claims the designation נביא itself 'implies the background of the council', and translates the term 'one who is called' (cf. Akkadian *nabīum*). Mullen, *Divine Council*, 216. Compare this view with the results of my semantic analysis in Part I.

people to turn from their wicked ways (וישובו מדרכם הרע) and from their wicked deeds (מעלליהם).⁵⁵⁵

If we read this statement in juxtaposition with the storm of YHWH passage in 23.19–20, then we might think that this is the function of *Unheilsprophetie*, that is, negative prophetic speech intended to make the people repent. However, the language of 23.22 is rather non-specific about the kind of words YHWH has for the people. It is clear that negative speech is intended to bring about repentance in the people, but encouraging speech also has this same function.⁵⁵⁶ Prophetic speech from YHWH functions to reinforce fidelity to YHWH and adherence to his will regardless of whether or not it is positive or negative.

YHWH's self-referential questions in Jer 23.23–24 stand out in their context. Many commentators have some difficulty relating them to their context. How do these statements regarding YHWH being either near (מקרב) or far (מרחק) relate to the criticisms of the prophets in the context of the pericope of 23.9–40?⁵⁵⁷ On the surface, there is not much in Jer 23.23–24 that relates directly to prophets, or even to its literary context in 23.9–40;⁵⁵⁸ these verses are not polemical, nor do they mention any religious figures or behaviours. The relation between 23.23–24 and its context is more indirect; in these meditations on YHWH's presence, there are ramifications for the commission of Jeremiah as נביא לגוים in 1.5 as well as the idea of the divine council found in 23.18, 22. Only some suggestive comments can be offered here.

The governing word pair in Jer 23.23–24 is found in the opening verse; the two terms מקרב/מרחק in 23.23 are key to the interpretation of the passage. The two terms מרחק/מקרב are commonly used in poetry as a pair of opposites.⁵⁵⁹ Their function in the question in 23.23, however, is somewhat vague. In what sense is YHWH both 'near' and 'distant'? Modern commentators understand the terms to refer to geographical space, in contrast to some rabbinic interpretations that understood the word-pair also to have a

⁵⁵⁵ Moberly tries to argue on semantic grounds for the sense 'they would have sought to turn them from their wicked way and from their evil deeds [emphasis mine]'. However, I do not find this proposal very convincing. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 87.

⁵⁵⁶ I comment on these issues more specifically in chapter 5, section 4.3.1, page 184.

⁵⁵⁷ On קרב and רחוק as a word-pair, see Olmo Lete, Ugarítico-hebreos preteridos, *AuOr* 2 (1984), 19.

⁵⁵⁸ Quell is of the view that nothing in Jer 23.23–24 that connects with 23.9–40. Quell, *Wahre und falsche Propheten*, 214–15. So also McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 587.

⁵⁵⁹ Watson, Some Additional Wordpairs, in: *Ascribe to the Lord*, ed. Eslinger and Taylor, JSOTS 67, Sheffield, 1988, 189; Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse*, 275.

temporal connotation.⁵⁶⁰ Other clues in the text make it more likely that a geographical reference is present in the *מקרב/מרחק* word-pair. The reference to *יִסְתֵּר אִישׁ בְּמִסְתָּרִים* ('a man hides in secret'), along with the other word-pair of geographical terms *שָׁמַיִם/אָרֶץ* ('heaven/earth'), both point to a geographical description in 23.23 (cf. Ps 139.7–10).

If we consider two significant notions related to prophecy in Jeremiah, namely the collocation *נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם* in Jer 1.5 and the divine council in 23.18, 22, some additional possibilities emerge. One possible interpretation of the question in Jer 23.23 is that YHWH is discouraging a provincial mindset in the prophets who prophesy well-being. By describing himself as both 'near' and 'distant', YHWH implicitly is rejecting the notion that his jurisdiction is restricted to a narrow horizon. That is to say, the god of Israel and Judah is rightly powerful and operative both in Judah and beyond (cf. 27.5–8). For his prophet, appointed a *נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם* in 1.5, the concern and authority YHWH has for his people has to do with both national and international affairs.

There may also be some slight connection to the prior references to YHWH's council in Jer 23.18, 22. In the two references to the divine council in 23.16–22, the assumption is that prophets are meant to stand (*עָמַד*) in the council, and to see (*רָאָה*) and hear (*שָׁמַע*) YHWH's word. In 23.24 YHWH makes it clear that he sees (*אֶרְאֶנּוּ*) those who might hide in secret, and the motif of 'seeing' is a frequent metaphor in passages which describe YHWH's judgment (e.g. 4.23–26). The idea could then be summarised as such: YHWH issues his decrees from his council, from whence prophets are understood to be obligated to report them to others, and this council sees and judges all of the cosmos (23.24).

3.4. Summary

Attention falls squarely on the prophets in 23.16–22, though they are not addressed directly, and the theme of their legitimacy runs throughout.⁵⁶¹ Instead, YHWH warns an unspecified audience against listening to their messages. The motifs of being sent (*שָׁלַח*), commanded (*צִוָּה*) and spoken to (*דִּבֶּר*) are used in accusations against the prophets. The expectation, naturally, is that they ought to be. Again we find similar elements here in Jeremiah as in the ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy.⁵⁶²

⁵⁶⁰ Kimchi took *מִקְרָב* to be a reference to *אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים* who are *חֲדָשִׁים*, as in the reference to gods *מִקְרָב בָּאוּ* in Deut 32.17 (cf. Judg 5.8). See the discussion in McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 585.

⁵⁶¹ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 134.

⁵⁶² On the prophetic *Sendungsbewusstsein*, see Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182–97; Huffmon,

The audience is told not to listen the words of the prophets (דברי הנבאים), a message summarised as 'it will go well for you' (שלוש יהיה לכם) and 'disaster will not come upon you' (לא תבוא עליכם רעה). Their prophesying is called חזון לבם ('a vision of their own hearts') in 23.16. It should be noted that this accusation puts the prophetic word and vision in parallel; to the polemicist in 23.16, they have the same function and effect, making the people empty (מהבליים). As I have already argued in 1.4–19, visions are portrayed as a part of the prophetic task.⁵⁶³ In 23.16–24, visions have a similar function as they are set in parallel to prophetic messages. I would draw the same conclusion in 23.16 and assert that they function to legitimate prophetic speech. As in 1.11–14, the text in 23.16 suggests a co-operative relationship between vision and speech.⁵⁶⁴ By attacking these visions as false, Jeremiah empties their words of their legitimacy.

Where scholars once thought that prophetic participation in the divine council was unique to the Hebrew tradition,⁵⁶⁵ it is now a common view that this was true of prophets across the ancient Near East.⁵⁶⁶ Prophets were generally expected to stand in the divine council. The language of Jer 23.22 is rather non-specific about the kind of words YHWH has for the people; as with any other prophesying, messages that come from the divine council are expected to encourage fidelity to YHWH regardless of whether or not they are positive or negative.

In one of the recent monographs concerning the so-called 'false prophecy' problem, Moberly offers a prolonged discussion of the divine council.⁵⁶⁷ He points to the various senses of the word סוד, noting that it refers to 'a gathering of people' in Jer 15.17,⁵⁶⁸ and also can refer to the 'understanding that characterizes those who are intimate with one another' as in Prov 25.9. Based on these analogies, he suggests that in Jer 23.18, 22 the

Company of Prophets; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 221–24.

⁵⁶³ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, 66–70; Hayes, *Role of Visionary Experiences*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

⁵⁶⁴ Mayes, *Prophecy and Society in Israel*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

⁵⁶⁵ E.g. Mullen, *Divine Council*.

⁵⁶⁶ Gordon, *From Mari to Moses*, in: *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of the Sages*, ed. Clines and McKay, JSOTS 162, Sheffield, 1993, 71–74; Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*. Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26.

⁵⁶⁷ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 75–88.

⁵⁶⁸ This reference to סוד in Jer 15.17 may not be as simple as Moberly thinks. Gordon pointed out that in the preceding verse, Jeremiah accepts a kind of 'divine word commissioning him to be a prophet' as he describes consuming YHWH's word. This would mean that a similar concern with prophetic legitimacy is at work in 15.17. Gordon, *Standing in the Council*, 194–95.

concept of standing in YHWH's council refers to personal 'intimacy with YHWH' that comes from being in his presence like Abraham (Gen 18.17–19) and Moses (Deut 5.23–33).⁵⁶⁹ One can verify claims to stand in the divine council with 'the prophet's lifestyle and message ... which give content to the claim about God'.⁵⁷⁰ Accordingly, he asserts that it is 'not a matter of some unusual "experience"', as in a form of prophetic ecstasy. Rather, Moberly claims it is

having a disposition that is open to, engaged with, and responsive to YHWH's will for his people when YHWH calls; such a person's consciousness is indeed altered, but not through transitory or induced states of "exaltation" but through appropriation of God's will in such a way that one's vision of the world and of life within it, and one's conduct correspondingly, is transformed.⁵⁷¹

This kind of reading, of course, follows Deist's 'old paradigm' of prophetic criticism, which is interested in the deeds and character of the 'great' prophets as moral paragons.⁵⁷² It also personalises and interiorises a widely spread cultural idea common throughout the ancient Near East.⁵⁷³ However, in the context of ancient divination, this is not the way that claims about the divine council would be evaluated.

Three other possibilities are much more likely. First, the divine council could be associated with the temple precinct itself (cf. Isa 6; Psa 82).⁵⁷⁴ As Nissinen observed, this fits the pattern found in Neo-Assyrian texts, where prophets are even associated with a particular ritual related to the divine council (cf. SAA 12 69:27–31).⁵⁷⁵ Second, the council could be associated with its human counterpart, the royal court (cf. 1 Kgs 22).⁵⁷⁶ The parallels between the royal and divine courts include both as places where important deliberations are made. Third, the divine council could simply be a visionary experience, which

⁵⁶⁹ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 74, 81. In my view, this is an astonishingly simplistic reading of these texts. On Gen 18 as a text related to ideas about the divine council, see Gordon, *Standing in the Council*.

⁵⁷⁰ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 81.

⁵⁷¹ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 81.

⁵⁷² Compare this to Skinner's declaration that 'to a false heart no true revelation is vouchsafed.' Skinner, *Prophecy and Religion*, 195.

⁵⁷³ See the very useful survey of material from across the ancient Near East in Kee, *Heavenly Council and its Type-scene*, *JSOT* 31 (2007), 259–73.

⁵⁷⁴ Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, 79–84; Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*, 16–17.

⁵⁷⁵ For the text, see Kataja and Whiting, *Grants, Decrees and Gifts*, SAA 12, Helsinki, 1995, 71–77, esp. 74. See Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*, 16–17. Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26.

⁵⁷⁶ Gordon, *Standing in the Council*, 200–04.

seems to be the common view.⁵⁷⁷ The likeliest explanation is that the different cultural manifestations of this common idea are dependent on context. In some places, a royal or cultic setting might best explain the instance. Here in the context of Jer 23.16–24, it appears to be related to a visionary experience that legitimises the prophet. This reading neatly fits a context which is already occupied with the relationship between prophetic messages and visions (cf. 23.16).

4. Jeremiah 23.25–32

A new section of text opens in Jer 23.25 with the introduction of the theme of dreams. Where 23.23–24 contains a general meditation on the presence of YHWH, 23.25–32 is a series of negative, critical statements directed against prophets, culminating in the statement in 23.31–32 that YHWH himself is **על הנביאים** ('against the prophets'). Dreams are a consistent theme in these polemics, as the lexeme **חלום** appears in 23.25, 27–28, 32 and marks the thematic boundaries of the pericope.

4.1. Text and translation

- שמעתי את אשר אמרו הנבאים הנבאים בשמי שקר לאמר חלמתי חלמתי (25)
עד מתי היש⁵⁷⁸ בלב הנבאים נבאי⁵⁷⁹ השקר ונביאי תרמת לבם (26)
החשבים להשכיח את עמי שמי בחלומתם אשר יספרו איש לרעהו כאשר שכחו (27)
אבותם את שמי בבעל (28)
הנביא אשר אתו חלום יספר חלום⁵⁸⁰ ואשר דברי אתו ידבר דברי אמת מה לתבן (28)

⁵⁷⁷ See the survey in Kee, Heavenly Council and its Type-scene. Similarly, see Niehr, *Der höchste Gott*, 81–82.

⁵⁷⁸ BHS suggests reading **הַשְׁמִי** for **הִישׁ**, noting the absence of **ה** in the versions and Exod 23.21. According to this reading, **הַשְׁמִי** is a combination of an interrogative **ה** with **שמי** ('my name'). In favour of this view, see, e.g. HALAT II, 423, HALOT I, 444. Others have come up with solutions, such as **הַיִּשְׁבֵּל** ('wird sich bekehren das Herz [der Propheten]') suggested by Duhm, *Jeremiah*, 191. The phrase **הַיִּשְׁבֵּל בְּלֵב** is strange, but the basic sense is clear enough (see McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 589.).

⁵⁷⁹ BHS emends (*probabiliter*) **וְנִבְיָאִי** to **וְנִבְיָאִי**. This would replace the plural construct with another *niphal* participle, as in Jer 23.26a. Because of the text internal evidence (parallel *niphal* participles), and the minimal change to the consonantal text, this suggestion is reasonable. However, the **י** in **וְנִבְיָאִי** can be read as having an epexegetical function, providing more detail about **נבאי השקר** in 23.26a; see IBHS §39.2.4. Thus I do not find it necessary to adopt the suggested change.

⁵⁸⁰ BHS reads **חלום** ('his dream') and refers to **ὁ** (**τὸ ἐν ὕπνῳ αὐτοῦ**). In my view, this change in L is more interpretive than text-critical. It reflects a longstanding tendency to privilege the 'word of YHWH' concept over other means of revelation such as dreams. Thus **חלום** ('his dream') contrasts with **דברי** ('my word'), which is to say, dreams come from prophets but the word comes from YHWH. With this in mind, I do not find the arguments supporting the emendation to be persuasive text-critically.

את הבר נאם יהוה

- (29) הלוא כה⁵⁸¹ דברי כאש נאם יהוה וכפטיש יפצץ סלע
 (30) לכן הנני על הנביאים נאם יהוה מגנבי דברי איש מאת רעהו
 (31) הנני על הנביאים נאם יהוה הלקחים לשונם וינאמו נאם
 (32) הנני על נביאי⁵⁸² חלמות שקר נאם יהוה ויספרום ויתעו את עמי בשקריהם
 ובפחזותם ואנכי לא שלחתיים ולא צויתים והועיל לא יועילו לעם הזה נאם יהוה

- (25) I have heard what the prophets have said, prophesying deceit in my name, saying, I have had a dream, I have had a dream.
 (26) How long? Is there⁵⁸³ in the heart of the prophets who prophesy deceit, and prophets with their deceptive hearts,⁵⁸⁴
 (27) the intent to make my people forget my name with their dreams which they report to each other, as their fathers forgot my name because of Baal?
 (28) Let the prophet who has a dream report the dream, and who has my word announce my word accurately. What does straw have to do with grain, oracle of YHWH?
 (29) Is not therefore my word like fire, oracle of YHWH, and like a hammer that shatters rock?
 (30) Therefore here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who steal my words from one another.
 (31) Here I am against the prophets, oracle of YHWH, who take their tongue and announce oracles.
 (32) Here I am against those who prophesy lying dreams, oracle of YHWH, and report them and lead my people astray with their lies and their boasting. I did not send them and I did not command them. They profit this people nothing, oracle of YHWH.

⁵⁸¹ BHS reads כִּהֵּ for כֵּה. The *qal* participle כִּהֵּ derives from כוה ('burn'), a verb with no other occurrences in *qal* (cf. Isa 43.2; Prov 6.28; HALOT I, 463). This is an old suggestion still followed by several commentators; see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 647., as well as Volz, *Jeremia*, 241; Nötscher, *Jeremia*, HSAT VII/2, Bonn, 1934, 182; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 154; Weiser, *Jeremia* 1 - 25.14, 207.. Though the syntax is unusual (see Neh 13.18), I prefer not to emend the text here.

⁵⁸² BHS inserts הַנְּבִיאִים after the *niphal* participle נְבִיאִי in Jer 23.32, citing versional evidence in Ⓢ(Ⓢ^{Ed}Ⓢ). presumably in order to supply a grammatical subject.

⁵⁸³ An older reading supposes that the sense of הִישׁ is similar to that found in Jer 37.17 where Zedekiah asks Jeremiah הִישׁ דְּבַר מֵאֵת יְהוָה ('Is there a word from YHWH?'). Following this view, the phrase with הִישׁ in 23.19 would mean, 'Is there [a word] in the heart of the prophets ... [namely] the intent to make my people forget my name?'. On this view, see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 646-47.

⁵⁸⁴ It is normal in Jeremiah for a nominal form of נְבִיא to be followed by a *niphal* participle; see e.g. Jer 14.14, 15; 23.25, 26; 27.15.

4.2. Prophets and deceit

In the opening verse of Jer 23.25–32, YHWH claims to have heard what the prophets prophesy in his name, and he characterises it with the lexeme שקר ('lie').⁵⁸⁵ שקר has a wide semantic range and is associated with a variety of behaviours including prophesying. Various accusations of deceit are made against prophets in a number of texts (5.12–14, 31; 6.13 = 8.10; 14.11–16; 20.6; 23.14, 26, 32; 27.10, 14–16; 28.15; 29.9, 21, 23, 31; 43.2). The accusation of deceit in 23.25 is paired with collocation הנבאים בשמי and is a part of the textually difficult phrase הנבאים נבאי השקר in 23.26.

Speaking and prophesying in the name of YHWH are regarded as significant behaviours in Jeremiah; there are claims that people speak properly (e.g. Jer 26.24) and improperly in YHWH's name. Other religious behaviours are performed 'in/with YHWH's name': it is called upon (קרא *qal*) in 10.25; sworn by (שבע *hiphil*) in 12.16; 44.26; prophesied in/with (נבא *niphal*) in 14.14–15; 27.15; 29.9, 21; and spoken in (דבר *piel*) in 20.9; 29.23.

The seriousness of speaking in YHWH's name is not too dissimilar to the description in Jer 23.29, where YHWH's word is likened to fire and a hammer that shatters rock (cf. 20.9). A very similar text, which is also critical of prophets, is found in 5.14, where YHWH tells Jeremiah that he has placed his words in his mouth like fire (הנני נתן דברי) (בפיך לאש). YHWH's wrath (חמה) is compared to fire in 4.4 and 21.12. The only other mention of a hammer (פטיש) comes in 50.23, where Babylon is metaphorically described as פטיש כל הארץ ('the hammer of the whole earth'). These images taken together in 23.29 form a destructive picture of YHWH's word.

In the context of Jer 23.25–32, there are two claims which use שקר made against individuals who prophesy. First, is the claim in 23.25–28 that the prophets prophesy falsehood (שקר) in YHWH's name as they claim חלמתי חלמתי ('I had a dream, I had a dream').⁵⁸⁶ Second, in the last of a series of clauses introduced with הנני in 23.30–32, YHWH declares himself against those who prophesy חלמות שקר ('lying dreams'). In both instances, the prophets are accused of leading the people into apostasy; these dreams will

⁵⁸⁵ DCH VIII, 557–59. The lexeme שקר has 55 occurrences in Jeremiah: 3.10, 23; 5.2, 31; 6.13; 7.4, 8, 9; 8.8, 10; 9.2, 4; 10.14; 13.25; 14.14; 16.19; 20.6; 23.14, 25, 26, 32; 27.10, 14, 15, 16; 28.15; 29.9, 21, 23, 31; 37.14; 40.16; 43.2; 51.17. See Klopfenstein, *Die Lüge*, Zürich, 1964; Klopfenstein, שקר, ThWAT II (1976), 1010–19; Seebass, Beyerle, and Grünwaldt, שקר, ThWAT VIII (1995), 466–72; Carpenter and Grisanti, שקר, NIDOTTE IV (1996), 247–49.

⁵⁸⁶ I discuss prophecy and dreams in more depth later in this chapter; see section 4.3, page 152.

make the people forget (שכח *hiphil*) YHWH's name (23.27) and cause them to be led astray (תעה *hiphil*) due to recklessness (23.32). Both of these claims in 23.25–28 and 23.30–32 are essentially related to the issue of apostasy; yet, there are some distinct points of emphasis in each claim that merit some comment.

First there is the claim of deceit in Jer 23.25. In the main clause, YHWH claims to hear what the prophets say; the rest of the verse is a participial phrase introduced by שקר, modifying the noun הנבאים. In this phrase, these prophets are quoted as saying חלמתי חלמתי, basically reporting the fact that they have had a dream. Thus the act of 'prophesying' as it is construed here includes reporting a dream. The phrasing of the verse suggests a high degree of semantic overlap between the verbs נבא and חלם. A similar idea is evident in the parallelism of 23.28. Here two אשר clauses modify the noun הנביא at the start of the verse; both אשר אתו חלום יספר חלום and אשר דברי ידבר דברי אשר דברי אמת describe the same activity.⁵⁸⁷ Thus, in both 23.25 and 23.28, the lexemes חלם and חלום are strongly associated with נביא; dreams are firmly considered to be a part of prophetic behaviour.

In what follows in Jer 23.26–28, the falsehood (שקר) spoken by the prophets is criticised as deceit from their own hearts (תרמת לבם) and a plan (חשב) to make the people forget YHWH's name. The prophets are accused of leading the people away from YHWH by means of their dreams אשר יספרו איש לרעהו ('which they relate to one another'). The lexeme ספר ('relate, number') is used several times in 23.25–32 to describe prophets transmitting their oracles to an audience.⁵⁸⁸ Three times it takes dreams (חלמות) as its object (23.27, 28, 32) and it parallels דבר in 23.28. The prophets are described as interacting with each other, relate their dreams איש לרעהו ('one to another') in 23.28 and are accused of stealing YHWH's words איש מאת רעהו ('one from another') in 23.30.⁵⁸⁹ On account of the dreams the prophets make known (ספר), the people run risk of repeating the sins of the forefathers, forgetting YHWH's name on account of Ba'al. I have discussed these criticisms

⁵⁸⁷ In my view, too much of the commentary of the verse is distracted by the first person pronominal suffixes in the phrase ואשר דברי ידבר דברי אמת in Jer 23.28. The lexemes דבר and חלום should be understood more like synonyms than antonyms in this context.

⁵⁸⁸ Only two other occurrences of ספר are found in Jeremiah, once in Jer 33.22 where it describes counting the sand of the sea, and once in 51.10 where the people encourage each other to recount in Zion YHWH's acts of salvation.

⁵⁸⁹ Only twice does the lexeme גנב ('steal') appear as a verb in Jeremiah, once in Jer 7.9 as a *qal* infinitive absolute, and once in 23.30 as a *piel* participle.

already in other passages, and they do not vary much from the general pattern in 23.26–28.⁵⁹⁰ In this case, it is clear that the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams *per se*, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy.

One aspect of Jer 23.26 which has troubled scholars for some time is the opening phrase in the verse, **עַד מַתִּי הִישׁ בִּלְבַּ הַנְּבִאִים**. It is very likely that the text is corrupt.⁵⁹¹ As the text stands, two phrases introduce questions, as **עַד מַתִּי** ('how long?') is followed immediately with **הִישׁ**, the particle **יֵשׁ** ('there is') with an interrogative **ה**. This makes little grammatical sense. One way to alleviate the difficulty of **עַד מַתִּי הִישׁ** is to read **הִישׁ** as an affirmation that one has a (prophetic) word; for comparison, the word **יֵשׁ** is used in this manner in 37.17, where Zedekiah asks Jeremiah if there is a word from YHWH (**הִישׁ דְּבַר** (מֵאֵת יְהוָה)).⁵⁹² A very similar phrase occurs in 27.18, where YHWH encourages prophets to intercede with him **אִם יֵשׁ דְּבַר יְהוָה אִתָּם** ('if the word of YHWH is with them'). Read this way, the text of 23.26 is still slightly awkward and problematic, but a little less so.

Having discussed the first of the two **שָׁקֶר** claims in Jer 23.25–32, now I turn to the second in 23.32. YHWH declares himself against those who are prophesying lying dreams (**עַל נְבִאֵי חֲלֻמוֹת שָׁקֶר**). This claim is made in the context of three successive **הִנֵּה** ('behold') statements in 23.30–32. The repeated opening in these three verses suggests they should be considered together.

First in 23.30, YHWH declares **לִכֵּן הִנֵּה עַל הַנְּבִאִים** who steal his words from one another. The phrasing of the claim **מִגִּנְבֵי דְבָרֵי אִישׁ מֵאֵת רֵעֵהוּ** in 23.30 bears similarity to the description of the prophets' plan to mislead the people **אִישׁ לִרְעֵהוּ** which appears earlier in 23.27. Prophets interact with one another, so it seems, and here they are accused of theiving YHWH's word from one another with the lexeme **גָּנַב** *piel*. This is one of only two instances of the verb in Jeremiah (cf. **גָּנַב** *qal* in 7.9), and only one of two instances of **גָּנַב** *piel* in the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁹³ The sense of **גָּנַב** *piel* appears to include a hint of deceit in these uses, as suggested in some of the lexica.⁵⁹⁴ This would fit well con-

⁵⁹⁰ On Ba'al, see my comments beginning on page 118.

⁵⁹¹ Various emendations have been proposed; see my comments in note 578 on page 144.

⁵⁹² See Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 646–47.

⁵⁹³ The other instance in 2 Sam 15.6 describes Absalom's use of flattery to 'steal' the heart of the men of Israel. The accusation in Jer 23.30 also recalls the characterisation of the kings, officers, priests and prophets as a caught thief (**גָּנַב כִּי יִמְצָא**) in 2.26.

⁵⁹⁴ Several entries for **גָּנַב** *piel* suggest a resultative sense, such as 'sich durch Diebstahl aneignen' (Hamp, *ThWAT* II (1977), 43.), or 'steal away' (BDB, 170). For the *piel* in 2 Sam 15.6, see 'täuschen' (Gesenius¹⁷, 145) and 'sich (heimlich) aneignen, m. לָבַב jem. auf seine Seite ziehen' (Gesenius¹⁸, 224). Cf. Werblowsky, *Stealing*

textually with the accusation of deceit in 23.32. Of course, and quite importantly, the claim that these prophets are secretly stealing YHWH's word from one another assumes that they must have YHWH's word in the first place.⁵⁹⁵

In the second הנני statement in 23.31, YHWH declares himself against the prophets who take their tongues and announce oracles (הלקחים לשונם וינאמו נאם). In context, the phrase הלקחים לשונם may be derogatory, but it seems to have a plain meaning of 'take their tongue'. Most of the arguments in favour of a negative sense seem to rest on a particular reading of the verb נאם *qal*. Significantly, this is the only instance of a verbal form from נאם in the Hebrew Bible. The well-known nominal form appears very frequently in the phrase נאם יהוה. In 23.31 the phrase וינאמו נאם means, quite literally, 'to oracle an oracle'.

The third הנני statement in 23.32 contrasts with the previous two since it does not concern prophets *per se*. Here YHWH declares that he is על נבאי חלמות שקר. This participial collocation is unique and does not refer necessarily to a particular 'group'. More precisely, it refers to people engaged in a particular activity or performing a particular function.

This culminating statement rejects these prophets because they lead astray (תעה) the people with their lies (בשקריהם) and their 'boasting (?)' (ובפחזותם). The plural form פחזות, a substantive from פחז, is a *hapax legomenon*.⁵⁹⁶ The meaning of the word is quite uncertain, and it appears best to understand it as semantically parallel to שקר at least in this context. By prophesying lying dreams and relating them (ספר *piel*) to YHWH's people, these individuals lead the people astray (תעה *hiphil*), which is similar to the claim in 23.13. Part of 23.21 is repeated in 23.32, as YHWH says that he did not send (שלח *qal*) or command (צוה *piel*) these individuals. As a result, they do the people no good (הועיל לא יועילו), the same claim made against the Judaeen leadership in 2.8.⁵⁹⁷

Two other texts in Jeremiah, 14.13–16 and 29.21–23, refer to prophets הנבאים בשמי and accuse them of deceit with שקר.⁵⁹⁸ The phrases and ideas in these texts that are

the Word, VT 6 (1956), 105–6.

⁵⁹⁵ This is in contrast with Fischer, who uses scare-quotes in his translation 'die stehlend sind »meine worte«, Einer vom Anderen'. Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 685.

⁵⁹⁶ Cf. 'Schamlosigkeit' (ATTM I, 667). For פחזות, see 'boasting' HALOT II, 924. See also Lange, *Die Wurzel phz*, VT 51 (2001), 497–510.

⁵⁹⁷ The lexeme יעל appears in Jer 2.8, 11; 7.8; 12.13; 16.19; 23.32.

⁵⁹⁸ In the present work, see chapter 2, section 2.2.1, page 68.

shared with 23.25–32 merit their inclusion in here. In what follows, I will briefly discuss each in turn.

4.2.1. Jeremiah 14.11–16

In the context of the ‘drought liturgy’ of Jer 14.1–15.4,⁵⁹⁹ most interpreters identify a smaller text of 14.11–16 concerned with prophets. This text contains a series of polemical statements directed against the prophets and their activity. In the first two verses, YHWH instructs Jeremiah not to pray (פִּלֵּל *hithpael*) for the people’s benefit (לְטוֹבָה); YHWH will not listen to their cry (רִנָּה) while they fast (צוֹם *qal*), and will not accept their burnt sacrifice (עֹלָה) or grain offering (מִנְחָה). Both the intercessory prayer and the sacrificial practices have the same objective: to persuade YHWH to act on the supplicant’s behalf and stay the danger. In this case, YHWH will not heed. He will subject the people to sword, famine and pestilence.⁶⁰⁰

Similarly to Jer 4.10 (cf. 1.6), Jeremiah addresses YHWH with the exclamation אָהֵה in 14.13. The prophets, he recounts, are saying to the people that they will not experience disaster; rather, YHWH will give them complete safety (שְׁלוֹם אִמָּת). The prophets claim this safety applies במקום הזה, where ‘this place’ is usually a reference to the Jerusalem temple (e.g. 7.4, 10). The polemical statement against prophets begins in Jer 14.14. YHWH says in response to Jeremiah בְּשֵׁמִי נִבְּאִים נִבְּאִים, which is the same phrase found in 23.25. This is followed with the common accusation that YHWH has not sent (שָׁלַח *qal*), nor commanded (צִוָּה *piel*), nor spoken to (דִּבֶּר *piel*) these prophets (cf. 23.21).

Following this claim is a list of negative descriptions of these prophets’ activity: חֲזוֹן שָׁקֶר (‘false vision’), קֶסֶם (‘divination’), אֱלִיל (‘idol’),⁶⁰¹ and תְּרִמִּית לִבָּם (‘deceit of their heart’).⁶⁰² These polemics are all summarised in the phrase הִמָּה מִתְּנַבְּאִים לָכֶם at the end of 14.14. The strongly negative character of the preceding list has led many to understand

⁵⁹⁹ Beuken and Grol, Jeremiah 14.1–15.9, in: *Le Livre de Jérémie*, ed. Bogaert, BETL 54, Louvain, 1981, 297–342; Fohrer, Abgewiesene Klage, in: *Künder des Wortes*, ed. Ruppert, Weimar, and Zenger, Würzburg, 1982, 77–86; Boda, From Complaint to Contrition, ZAW 113 (2001), 186–97.

⁶⁰⁰ On the variety of combinations of the lexemes חֶרֶב (‘sword’), רָעָב (‘famine’) and דָּבָר (‘pestilence’) in Jeremiah, see Weippert, *Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, BZAW 132, Berlin, 1973, 148–91.

⁶⁰¹ Here Q וְאֱלִיל should be preferred to K וְאֱלִילִים. The masoretic vocalisation of K indicates one should read a י in place of the internal ו (pace BHS). McKane reads the pair as a hendiadys, ‘idolatrous divination’. McKane, *Jeremiah i–xxv*, 324.

⁶⁰² In my view, here Q וְתִרְמִית should be preferred to K וְתִרְמוֹת.

the *hithpael* participle in a negative sense, that is, that the prophets merely play at prophesying as they say these worthless things. This seems to place too much interpretive stress on the distinction between *niphal* and *hithpael* forms of נבא.⁶⁰³ The *niphal* describes the activity of the same prophets three times in 14.14–16; the *hithpael* and *niphal* verbs parallel one another, and the *hithpael* emphasises an iterative sense as it summarises a list.

YHWH goes on to accuse these prophets of speaking in his name without being sent (שלח *qal*) in Jer 14.15. The prophets will suffer the very things they say the land will not; by sword (חרב) and famine (רעב) they will perish. The same horrible fate will befall the people, who will be left to die in the streets, without burial, due to their wickedness (רעה).

4.2.2. Jeremiah 29.21–23

In Jeremiah's letter to the deportees in Babylon (Jer 29.1–32), two named individuals, Ahab ben Kolaiah and Zedekiah ben Maaseiah, are accused in 29.21–23 of prophesying שקר to the community of Judaeans (הנבאים לכם בשמי שקר). YHWH says he will deliver them to be put to death by king Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and it is normal for a king to issue punishment for 'deviant' prophetic behaviour in Jeremiah (e.g. 26.20–23; 36.26). A curse (קללה) modelled on their fate will be used by the deportees, that YHWH would roast the unlucky person with fire (קלה באש).

The reasons for the polemic and judgment against Ahab and Zedekiah are cited in Jer 29.23. They did outrageous things (עשו נבלה) and they committed adultery with their neighbours' wives (וינאפו את נשי רעיהם). The vast majority of interpreters take this reference to sexual misbehaviour literally; Ahab and Zedekiah were morally unfit to perform as prophets.⁶⁰⁴ In my view, this is problematic. It would be strange to repay a case of sexual infidelity with a public political execution by a foreign king, a legacy of a religious curse, an accusation of sacrilege, and an invocation of divine witness; the punishment does not fit the crime.⁶⁰⁵ The language and themes of 29.21–23 are deeply religious and

⁶⁰³ See my discussion of the *hithpael* in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, page 70.

⁶⁰⁴ E.g. Weiser, *Jeremiah* 25,15 - 52,34, 256. Cf. Holladay, *Jeremiah* 26–52, Hermeneia, Philadelphia, PA, 1989, 144.

⁶⁰⁵ While death was the prescribed punishment for adultery in Israelite legal traditions (e.g. Lev 20.10; Deut 22.22), there are several key differences in the situation described in Jer 29.23. The wronged husband

political in nature: kings in the ancient Near East attempted to quell prophetic attempts to foment unrest and political instability;⁶⁰⁶ נבלה is lexeme closely related to apostasy and idolatry;⁶⁰⁷ נאף is used metaphorically to describe a failure in singular adherence to YHWH; and the only other instance of YHWH functioning as an עד in Jeremiah is found in the context of vows taken during a divinatory inquiry (42.5).⁶⁰⁸ Ahab and Zedekiah prophesy שקר not because of moral unfittness, but due to religious failures.

4.3. Prophets, dreams and visions

Only a handful of texts in Jeremiah refer to dreamers or dreams with חלם (Jer 23.25–32 27.9; 29.8), and the lexeme חזון ('vision') only appears in 14.14 and 23.16. While there is some ongoing debate over the classification of dreams and visions, and their distinctiveness in relation to ancient prophecy, most understand prophecy, dreams and visions as similar 'intuitive' forms of divinatory activity in comparison to 'technical' forms.⁶⁰⁹

In Jeremiah, dreams and visions appear well within the normal range of prophetic activity, and several texts make use of visions as a part of their message (Jer 1.11–14; 24.1–10; cf. 4.23–26; 38.21–23).⁶¹⁰ There is no hint of a negative association between prophesying and visions as they are related by the prophet Jeremiah. They appear as normal forms of prophetic speech.

The two instances of חזון, in Jer 14.14 and 23.16, are both a part of criticisms directed against prophets, but both associated with prophetic speech. Prophets are accused of

would enforce the death penalty, not a king or royal figure, and both parties in the adulterous act were subject to the punishment. While adultery was considered a very serious crime or sin across the ancient Near East, oftentimes it was also possible to negotiate a punishment below the death penalty. This has led many to question whether or not Israelite law might have had similar provisions in practice and function. San Nicolò, Ehebruch, RLA II (1938), 299–302; Goodfriend, Adultery, ABD I (1992), 82–86; Otto, Marriage. II. Old Testament, RPP VIII (2010), 76–77.

⁶⁰⁶ Nissinen, Falsche Prophetie, 176–79.

⁶⁰⁷ The sense of 'folly' in relation to sexual offences is questioned in DCH V, 595–96.

⁶⁰⁸ HALOT I, 788.

⁶⁰⁹ The lexemes חזה ('seer') and the related word חזון ('vision') are understood as synonyms to נביא; see DCH V, 591. The word appears in the Zakkur inscription (KAI 202, A, line 12), where messages are delivered חזה עלהן (through seers and through visionaries'). The term is also found in the phrase חזון . וביר . חזון . עדין in the Deir 'Alla plaster text (KAI 312), combination I, line 1. See DNWSI I, 357–61. On this distinction, see Cancik-Kirschbaum, Prophetismus und Divination, 44–51; Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21–22; Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination; Stökl, Prophecy in the Ancient Near East, 7–11; Schmitt, Mantik im Alten Testament, 6–8.

⁶¹⁰ On the two vision reports in Jer 1.11–14 and 24.1–10, see Behrens, Prophetische Visionsschilderungen, 105–37.

prophesying a ‘lying vision’ (הזון שקר) in 14.14. Similarly in 23.16, the prophets are said to speak a vision of their heart (חזון לבם ידברו) which does not come from the mouth (מפי) of YHWH. Semantically, a חזון is both ‘spoken’ (דבר *piel*) and ‘prophesied’ (נבא *hithpael*).

In the context of Jer 23.25–32, dreaming and dreams are associated with ‘prophesying’ four times. The prophets are accused of prophesying falsehood (שקר) in YHWH’s name as they say חלמתי חלמתי. In 23.27 they are accused of using their dreams to lead the people astray, and in 23.32 the same claim is made against individuals prophesying lying dreams (על נבאי חלמות שקר). In 23.28, there is a direct association between a dream (חלום) and a word (דבר). The two אשר clauses in this verse are parallel to one another as they modify the noun הנביא; both חלום יספר חלום and אשר דברי אשר אתו חלום describe the same activity.⁶¹¹

Twice in Jeremiah, YHWH gives instructions not to listen (שמע *qal*) to the dreams communicated by prophets in Jer 27.9 and 29.8. In the list of religious specialists in 27.9, there is a reference to dreams (חלמת).⁶¹² In this case the diviners are associated with foreign kings, but a similar reference in 29.8 associates diviners and dreams with Judaeans. Jeremiah’s letter to the deportees in Babylon includes a warning not to allow their prophets or diviners to deceive them. YHWH instructs them not to listen to the dreams they dream (אל תשמעו אל חלמתיכם אשר אתם מחלמים). The same warning not to listen (אל תשמעו) is frequently used in reference to prophets elsewhere, suggesting that ‘dreaming dreams’ and ‘prophesying’ are conceptually quite similar (23.16; 27.9, 14, 16–17).

Some place a great deal of interpretive weight on the first person pronominal suffixes of the phrase ואשר דברי ידבר דברי אמת in Jer 23.28. The verse is interpreted as an implicit comparison and value judgment between two different means of prophesying. In this view, dreams are the prophet’s but the word is YHWH’s. Accordingly, dreams should be greeted with more suspicion than the words spoken by prophets. As I have argued in this section and elsewhere, this distinction does not hold on a semantic level.⁶¹³ Both of the lexemes דבר and חלום are syntagmatically related to the same verbs (*piel*, דבר),

⁶¹¹ A short maxim appears in Jer 23.28 which is somewhat vague: מה לתבן את הבר (‘what does straw have to do with wheat?’). Neither straw (תבן) nor wheat (בר) appear elsewhere in Jeremiah, so there is little basis for comparison to understand the saying. For תבן cf. Isa 11.7; 65.25. For בר see Joel 2.24; Amos 5.11.

⁶¹² See the discussion in chapter 5, section 2.3, page 170.

⁶¹³ See the helpful overviews in Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament*, AOAT 313, Münster, 2004, 1–66; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 1–28.

ספר *piel*, שמע *qal*, נבא *niphal*) and associated with the activity of prophets—including Jeremiah.⁶¹⁴

4.4. Summary

Propheying in the name of YHWH constitutes an important behaviour which must be done properly. The theme of falsehood and the term שקר ('lie') has been much discussed,⁶¹⁵ and in Jer 23.25–28 the prophets are accused of שקר as they claim חלמתי חלמתי ('I had a dream, I had a dream'). On account of their dreams, the prophets make the people repeat the sins of their ancestors, forgetting YHWH's name on account of Ba'al. However, in this case, it is clear that the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams *per se*, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy.⁶¹⁶ In terms of the means of inspiration, the act of prophesying in 23.26–32 includes reporting a dream.

There is ongoing debate over the distinction between prophecy and dreams; Stökl sharply distinguishes between dreaming and prophesying,⁶¹⁷ while Huffmon and Nissinen classify them together.⁶¹⁸ As Huffmon argues, there are 'many variations and "exaggerations" of the possibilities of prophetic revelation' in the ancient Near Eastern sources. Different communities would simply choose from the available options.⁶¹⁹ As I have already argued in the semantic discussion, there is a degree of semantic overlap between the verbs נבא and חלם. In this context, the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams *per se*, but because they result in leading the people into apostasy. The same warning not to listen (אל תשמעו) is used in reference to prophetic words and dreams, suggesting that they are conceptually quite similar (23.16; 27.9, 14, 16–17). Thus, in

⁶¹⁴ Becking, Means of Revelation, in: *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah*, ed. Barstad and Kratz, BZAW 388, Berlin, 2009, 41–42.

⁶¹⁵ Klopfenstein, *Die Lüge*; Overholt, *Threat of Falsehood*, SBT 16, London, 1970, 86–104; Klopfenstein, שקר, ThWAT II; Müller, Falsehood שקר, DDD, (1999), 325–26.

⁶¹⁶ Cf. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 204–6, 319.

⁶¹⁷ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 10, 98, 222–23.

⁶¹⁸ Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 48, passim; Nissinen, What is Prophecy?, 21–22; Huffmon, Prophecy in the Mari Texts, 205–13, esp. 208–9. Also in support of this view is Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 56–57.

⁶¹⁹ Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 70.

my reading of this passage, dreams and visions appear well within the normal range of prophetic activity, and they appear to be normal forms of prophetic speech.⁶²⁰

5. Jeremiah 23.33–40

Following after Jer 23.25–32 is brief passage regarding the **משא יהוה**. In Jeremiah, this collocation is unique to 23.33–40 and it functions as the primary interest of the text. The opening verse in 23.33 establishes the theme of the passage. After the situation has been introduced, the following verses in 23.34–40 articulates particular conditions and consequences for speaking about the **משא יהוה**.

5.1. Text and translation

- (33) וכי ישאלך העם הזה או הנביא או כהן לאמר מה משא יהוה ואמרת אליהם את
מה משא⁶²¹ ונטשתי אתכם נאם יהוה
- (34) והנביא והכהן והעם אשר יאמר משא יהוה ופקדתי על האיש ההוא ועל ביתו
- (35) כה תאמרו איש על רעהו ואיש אל אחיו מה ענה יהוה ומה דבר יהוה
- (36) ומשא יהוה לא תזכרו עוד כי המשא יהיה לאיש דברו והפכתם את דברי אלהים
חיים יהוה צבאות אלהינו
- (37) כה תאמר אל הנביא מה ענך יהוה ומה דבר יהוה
- (38) ואם משא יהוה תאמרו לכן כה אמר יהוה יען אמרכם את הדבר הזה משא יהוה
ואשלח אליכם לאמר לא תאמרו משא יהוה
- (39) לכן הנני ונשיתי⁶²² אתכם נשא⁶²³ ונטשתי אתכם ואת העיר אשר נתתי לכם

⁶²⁰ Cf. Becking, *Means of Revelation*, 41–42; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 133–35.

⁶²¹ BHS reads **אַתֶּם הַמָּשָׂא** ('you are the burden') in place of **אַתֶּם-מֶה-מָשָׂא** and cites 𐤁𐤏 in support of this view (see GKC §117m). Barthélemy et al. are of divided opinion, but the majority supports this correction; it is in their view 'improbable que cette signification très fine ait été insérée après coup dans le texte si on y lisait auparavant le très clair **אַתֶּם הַמָּשָׂא**' (Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 648–49.). There is an alternative view, which holds that it is possible to read the **את** in **משא את מה** as the *nota accusativi* in the sense of 'as for' or 'regarding'. This would roughly translate as follows: 'and tell them what the oracle is, "and I will cast you off."' In my view, the text of L is corrupt in Jer 23.33 and the corrected reading in BHS makes sense of the text. Thus, I read **אתם המשא** along with, e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 647; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 599.

⁶²² For **ונשיתי**, BHS reads **ונשיתי** (= **ונשאתי**) with some Hebrew manuscripts and 𐤁𐤏𐤔𐤁. The problem here is driven by grammatical issues. The relationship between the *qal* perfect **ונשיתי** and *qal* inf. abs. **נשא** is complicated. The internal י in the 1cs *weqatal* form **ונשיתי** suggests the verb is **נשה** I ('to forget'), and **נשא** seems to be from **נשא** I (see HALOT I, 728; DCH V, 776–77; Gesenius¹⁸, 854; GKC, §23; GKB, §29g). The forms are closely related. BHS understands these verbs as from **נשא** I ('lift'), perhaps as another word-play on **משא** and as a related idea to **ונטשתי אתכם** ('and I will cast you off') in Jer 23.33, 39. For an exhaustive discussion of these and related problems, see McKane, **משא** in Jeremiah 23:33–40, in: *Prophecy*, ed. Emerton, BZAW 150, Berlin, 1980, 35–54; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 597–604. Along with other commentators (e.g. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 649–51.), I adopt with the change proposed by BHS.

⁶²³ BHS reads **נשא** for **נשא** along with some Hebrew manuscripts and 𐤁𐤏𐤔𐤁. For the grammatical issues involved, see my comment above in note 622. I adopt the change proposed by BHS.

ולאבותיכם מעל פני
ונתתי עליכם חרפת עולם וכלמות עולם אשר לא תשכח (40)

- (33) And when this people, or the prophet or priest, asks you, saying, 'What is the message of YHWH?'⁶²⁴ you will say to them 'You are the burden, and I will cast you off,'⁶²⁵ oracle of YHWH.
- (34) And the prophet, the priest or the people who says 'the message of YHWH' — I will punish that man and his house.
- (35) Thus you shall say to one another, each to his brother, 'What did YHWH answer?' or 'What did YHWH say?'
- (36) But 'the message of YHWH' do not remember any more, for the burden for a man will be his own word. You pervert the words of the living god, YHWH Hosts, our god.
- (37) Thus you will say to the prophet, 'What did YHWH answer you?' or 'What did YHWH say?'
- (38) But if you say 'the message of YHWH' then thus says YHWH, Because you said this word, 'the message of YHWH,' when I sent to you, saying, 'Do not say "the burden of YHWH," '
- (39) Therefore, behold, I will lift you up and I will cast you off, and the city that I gave to you and your fathers, away from my presence.
- (40) And I will lay upon you an eternal reproach, an eternal shame which will not be forgotten.

5.2. The speech of YHWH

It is clear that the dominant interest of Jer 23.33–40 is the phrase **מֵשַׁא יְהוָה**. In most of its occurrences, **מֵשַׁא** refers to a physical burden; for example, it is used to refer to literal 'burdens' in regulations concerning sabbath observation in Jer 17.21–24. In this basic, literal sense, a **מֵשַׁא** is a heavy load; in a metaphorical sense, it is a responsibility.⁶²⁶ However, the sense of **מֵשַׁא** is much different in the instances where it describes prophetic speech, as is the case in 23.33–40.⁶²⁷

⁶²⁴ Following Petersen, I have translated **מֵשַׁא** in the relevant places as 'message', corresponding to his translation of 'oracle'. This preserves a distinction between the phrases **מֵשַׁא יְהוָה** and **נֵאֻם יְהוָה** in English. See Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 26.

⁶²⁵ There is disagreement over the interpretation of **נָטַשׁ** here, especially as it relates to the lexeme **מֵשַׁא**. Those who understand **מֵשַׁא** as a debt or a pledge tend to take **נָטַשׁ** as 'forsake'. See, e.g., Tur-Sinai (Torczyn-er), **מֵשַׁא יְהוָה**, *MGWJ* 76 (1932), 273–84; Weil, *Exégèse de Jérémie* 23, 33–40, *RHR* 118 (1938), 201–8. HALOT I, 695.

⁶²⁶ See HALOT I, 641–42.

⁶²⁷ There are a number of instances where the term **מֵשַׁא** describes or introduces prophetic speech. See 2 Kgs 9.25; Isa 13.1; 14.28; 15.1; 17.1; 19.1; 21.1, 11, 13; 22.1; 23.1; 30.6; Jer 23.33 (x2), 34, 35 (x2), 38 (x3); Ezek 12.10; Nah

Or is it? A great number of studies have attempted to make sense of the lexeme **משא** as a description of prophetic speech that is somehow a ‘burden’ or ‘heavy’, largely by appeals to the etymological origins of the term.⁶²⁸ This led to the view that a ‘burdensome’ oracle was a negative one.⁶²⁹ However, as is the case in Jer 23.33–40, it is not necessarily the case that a **משא** prophecy is inherently negative. As it is used here, it is more like a technical term for a prophetic oracle.⁶³⁰

Some aspects of the text are particularly relevant for the present investigation. One of the technical terms for divinatory inquiry, **שאל** *qal*, opens the text in Jer 23.33. The text imagines the people asking for a word from YHWH. It is not specified in 23.33 to whom this question is asked; however in 23.38 YHWH instructs the people how they should speak (**אמר** *qal*) to the prophet. It is likely that a prophet is being asked for an oracle in 23.33. The question they ask **מה משא יהוה** (‘what is the burden of YHWH?’) can come from either the people, a prophet or a priest—there is little distinction between them here. In response, the prophet (?) is instructed to respond ‘I will cast you off’ (**נטשתי אתכם**). This is one of the distinctive characteristics of the text, namely, an ironic play on the plain meaning of **משא** as a heavy load.

In Jer 23.34 YHWH declares that he will punish (**פקד**) the prophet, priest or people who says **משא יהוה**, apparently contradicting the situation in 23.33. Rather than say **משא יהוה**, the people are encouraged to ask to one another ‘what has YHWH answered?’ (**מה ענה יהוה**) or ‘what has YHWH said?’ (**מה דבר יהוה**). In either case, the conceptual framework is similar to asking about the **משא יהוה**; the process of inquiry is only different regarding the terminology used to refer to YHWH’s oracle. This is reemphasised in 23.36–37, where the same prohibition against the **משא יהוה** is replaced with asking about YHWH’s answer (**ענה יהוה**) and YHWH’s word (**דבר יהוה**). If anyone says **משא יהוה**, YHWH declares (cf. 23.30–32), he will completely forget (**נשה**) that person and forsake (**נטש**) them along with their ancestral city (23.39), and set an eternal reproach (**חרפת עולם**) upon them which will never be forgotten (23.40).

1.1; Hab 1.1; Zech 9.1; 12.1; Mal 1.1; Lam 2.14; 2 Chr 24.27. Boda, *Freeing the Burden of Prophecy*, 338.

⁶²⁸ An overview can be found in Boda, *Freeing the Burden of Prophecy*, 338–41.

⁶²⁹ E.g. Stolz, **נשא**, *THAT II* (1976), 116–17.

⁶³⁰ Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 27–33; Weis, *Definition of the Genre maśśā*, PhD thesis, Claremont Graduate School, 1986; Weis, *Oracle: Old Testament*, ABD V (1992), 28–29. According to Boda’s assessment, **משא** does not fully qualify as a form critical tag. Boda, *Freeing the Burden of Prophecy*, 346–50.

5.3. Summary

Jer 23:33–40 is uniquely interested in the phrase **מִשַּׁא יְהוָה**, but its interest in prophets is similar to the rest of 23:9–32. Here the close relation between prophet and priest is found yet again, as both are involved in the same process of inquiry and both receive the same form of judgment. The text's pronounced focus on the phrase **מִשַּׁא יְהוָה** shows an interest in types of prophetic oracles and the technical language used to refer to them. According to the older view, the sense of **מִשַּׁא** was related to 'burden', and by extension, a 'burden-some' oracle was an oracle of doom.⁶³¹ However, it is more like a technical term for a prophetic oracle.⁶³² As Boda observes, rather importantly, the conceptual framework for asking (**שָׁאַל**) for oracles with the phrases **עֲנֵה יְהוָה** and **דְּבַר יְהוָה** is the same for **מִשַּׁא יְהוָה**. The process of inquiry is the same, and only the terminology is different. He concludes that in the **מִשַּׁא יְהוָה** texts give 'no indication that prophecy as a means of revelation has been eradicated', but are concerned with the threat of idolatry.⁶³³

6. Conclusion

Under the heading **לְנַבִּיאִים** in Jer 23:9, the material in 23:9–40 contains a rich store of information for the nature and function of prophecy. Examining these features on a phenomenological level, the patterns and motifs used here are a rich resource of information for the conceptual understanding of prophecy in Jeremiah. However, the tendency to read these verses as 'biographical' continues to obscure the basic functions of prophecy found there.⁶³⁴ Lament and cult are major themes in 23:9–15, and the accusations of adultery (**נִאֲף**) and pollution (**חֲנִף**) signal the general importance of these concepts for prophecy. The implicit assumption of these criticisms is that the prophets, together with the priests, have failed in their expected function.⁶³⁵ They should not be read as a contrast of moral

⁶³¹ Stolz, **נִשָּׂא**, THAT II, 116–17. Cf. Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, 338–41.

⁶³² Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 27–33; Weis, Definition of the Genre *maššā'*; Weis, Oracle: Old Testament, ABD V. Cf. Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, 346–50.

⁶³³ Boda, Freeing the Burden of Prophecy, 355. This contrasts with Lange's view, that the text reflects 'eine allgemeine Ablehnung jeder gegenwärtigen und zukünftigen Prophetie'. Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 290. Similarly, Pedersen argued that the text seeks 'to prohibit the prophetic enterprise as we know it from the classical prophets.' Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 33.

⁶³⁴ Cf. Fischer, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 690; Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 70–71.

⁶³⁵ Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer,

standards with Jeremiah.⁶³⁶ Similarly, reading the references to the divine council in 23.18, 22 as a testimony of Jeremiah's personal 'intimacy with YHWH' evident in his 'lifestyle' seems to miss the fundamental point.⁶³⁷ If prophets elsewhere were also expected to participate in the divine council in some way, then it would discourage the conclusion that only the exceptionally pious prophets were privy to it.⁶³⁸ It is important to recognise that the rhetorical force of the polemics against prophets in the passage comes from the expectation that they ought not to be the case. Prophets ought not to promote apostasy, they ought to promote acceptable cultic practices, and they ought to stand in the divine council.

Prophetic legitimacy is a major theme in Jer 23.9–40, and the concepts of being sent (שלח), commanded (צוה) and spoken to (דבר) in 23.16–22 follow the pattern of ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy.⁶³⁹ These concepts are used to reinforce the authority and authorisation of a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Similarly, visions (הזון) appear in 23.16 in a cooperative relationship with speech, and they too function to legitimate prophetic speech (cf. 1.11–14). These visions parallel prophetic words in 23.16 and have the same effect. I see little reason to draw a sharp distinction between speech and visions in the discussion of prophecy in 23.16–24.⁶⁴⁰ In 23.16–24, visions have a similar function as they are set in parallel to prophetic messages. I would draw the same conclusion in 23.16 and assert that they function to legitimate prophetic speech. As in 1.11–14, the text in 23.16 suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech.⁶⁴¹

Similar to the way prophetic visions are polemicised in Jer 23.16 (cf. חזון לבם), the prophets are accused of falsehood (שקר) and in 23.25–28 as they claim to have had a

Priests and the Temple Cult, 256–57.

⁶³⁶ Cf., e.g., Tilson, *False Prophets in the Old Testament*, 433–36; Wolff, *Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie*, 465–68; Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie*, 28–29; Vogels, *Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?*, 696–98; McNamara, *Kriterien zur Unterscheidung*; Münderlein, *Kriterien wahrer und falscher Prophetie*; Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 348; Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 71 n. 80; Willi, »Anhaltspunkte« zur Unterscheidung, 102.

⁶³⁷ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 74, 81.

⁶³⁸ Gordon, *From Mari to Moses*, 71–74; Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*, 16–17; Gordon, *Standing in the Council*, 190–92. Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26.

⁶³⁹ On the prophetic *Sendungsbewusstsein*, see Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182–97; Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 221–24.

⁶⁴⁰ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, 66–70; Hayes, *Role of Visionary Experiences*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

⁶⁴¹ Mayes, *Prophecy and Society in Israel*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

dream (חלם). As in the case of their visions, the dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams *per se*; this is not a criticism of the means of prophetic inspiration. These dreams are criticised because they lead the people into apostasy. In contemporary scholarship on prophecy, there is still some debate over the relationship between prophecy and dreams as ‘intuitive’ forms of divination. To cite recent examples, Stökl would differentiate between prophecy and dreams, while Huffmon and Nissinen would not.⁶⁴² In my view, it is because their function is the same that I would not draw a sharp distinction between prophetic messages and dreams. The same warnings are issued for both, and the same outcomes are criticised for both. An additional piece of evidence in support of this claim is my finding in the semantic analysis that the verbs חלם and נבא share semantic overlap. Dreams and visions appear well within the prophetic purview.⁶⁴³

Prophetic participation in the divine council is a common feature of prophecy in the ancient Near East, and the Israelite prophetic tradition is no exception.⁶⁴⁴ The references to the divine council in Jer 23.18, 22 are also a part of the concern for prophetic legitimacy in this text. In contrast to Moberly, I do not think these references concern a kind of personal ‘intimacy with YHWH’.⁶⁴⁵ Instead, there is good reason to read this as another reference to visionary experience in relation to prophetic messages. Claiming that one has had a vision serves to underwrite a prophetic message with greater authority.

prophet and priest

Finally, in support of the semantic analysis that נביא and כהן are very closely related, the relation between prophet and priest is emphasised in Jer 23.9–40. They are criti-

⁶⁴² See Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 48, *passim*; Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21–22; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 10, 98, 222–23; Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Mari Texts*, 205–13, esp. 208–9. It is not the case that Nissinen and Huffmon fail to see any formal differences between the way prophetic messages and dreams are reported. Rather, they think the similarities between messages and dreams in prophecy should discourage any sharp distinctions. Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 48, *passim*; Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21–22; Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Mari Texts*, 205–13, esp. 208–9. See also Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 56–57.

⁶⁴³ Cf. Becking, *Means of Revelation*, 41–42; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 133–35.

⁶⁴⁴ Gordon, *From Mari to Moses*, 71–74; Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*; Jong, *Isaiah*, 338. Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26.

⁶⁴⁵ I would also disagree with his reading of Gen 18.17–19 and Deut 5.23–33. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 74, 81. Cf. Gordon, *Standing in the Council*. Similar emphases on the morality of the prophets is found in, e.g., Cf., e.g., Wolff, *Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie*, 465–68; Osswald, *Falsche Prophetie*, 28–29; Vogels, *Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?*, 696–98; Münderlein, *Kriterien wahrer und falscher Prophetie*; Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 348; Willi, »Anhaltspunkte« zur Unterscheidung, 102.

cised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes; their activities and functions overlap; they are involved in the same process of inquiry and both receive the same form of judgment. Tiemeyer has called the prophet and priest pair a ‘merism’, and I would agree that there is not a sharp distinction between them.⁶⁴⁶ They are collaborative partners.

⁶⁴⁶ Tiemeyer, *Priests and the Temple Cult*, 234. See also Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets*; Tilson, *False Prophets in the Old Testament*, 427; Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 286–95; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 112–13.

Chapter 5. Jeremiah 27.1–28.17

1. Preliminary remarks

The reported prophetic messages and short narrative of Jer 27.1–28.17 contain numerous references to prophets, their messages and their activities. Being concerned with prophetic conflict in Jeremiah, the statements in 27.18 and 28.8–9 are especially significant for our interest and shall be discussed in context.

The political and religious interests of the text relate to two primary themes. First is the ‘yoke of Babylon’ (Jer 27.8, 11, 12; 28.2, 4, 11, 14) and the central question of whether or not to serve the king of Babylon. Second is a concern for people and goods which were taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar in 596 BCE. This concern primarily relates to the ‘vessels of the house of YHWH’ (27.16, 18, 19, 21; 28.3, 6) and Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah (27.20; 28.4). Some unique textual features also are present in 27.1–28.17 which bind the chapters together. Several names have different spellings in these chapters than in the rest of the book. These and other features encourage analysing them together.⁶⁴⁷

Justly famous in prophetic studies is the story of Hananiah and Jeremiah in Jer 28.1–17. Continuing themes from 27.1–22, it is a dramatic portrayal of interaction between prophets in the temple court. A number of shared themes and similarities suggest Jer 27–28 are best discussed together: similar chronological notices in 27.1 and 28.1, repetitions of key words, such as עַל (‘yoke’) in 27.8, 11–12; 28.2, 4, 11, 14 and שָׁקַר (‘lie’) in 27.10, 14–16; 28.15, and common themes, such as the temple vessels (27.16, 18–19, 21; 28.3, 6) and submission to Babylon (cf. 27.2, 5–8; 28.2–4, 11, 13–14). Most importantly, the two texts are fundamentally interested in prophets; the lexeme נְבִיא appears twenty-one times in these chapters (27.9, 14–16, 18; 28.1, 5–6, 8–12, 15, 17).

The basic structure of Jer 27.1–22 consists of a chronological heading in 27.1 and four oracles, concerning similar themes, addressed to three different audiences. The first

⁶⁴⁷ The יהו- theophoric ending of Jeremiah's name is shortened to ירמיה (27.1; 28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15; see also 29.1); Nebuchadnezzar's name is typically spelled נְבֻכַדְרֶאצַּר in Jeremiah, but in 27–28 is spelled נְבוּכַדְנֶאצַּר (27.6, 8, 20; 28.3, 11, 14; see also 29.1, 3); additional unique spellings include יהויקים in 27.1, and the spelling of Jehoiachin's name as יְחֹנִיָּה in 27.20 and יְכֹנִיָּה in 28.4; 29.2. [note justifying choice not to examine 29 in full]

in 27.2–11 concerns a group of Syro-Palestinian kings who have sent envoys to Jerusalem. The second oracle in 27.12–15 is addressed to king Zedekiah of Judah. Both of these messages in 27.2–11 and 12–15 emphasise YHWH's command to serve the king of Babylon. A third oracle in 27.16–18 addresses the priests and people in Jerusalem and warns them against hopeful prophetic messages. Each of these oracles in 27.2–11, 12–15 and 16–18 warn their audiences against listening to other prophets and diviners who contradict Jeremiah's message. The fourth oracle in 27.19–22 is also addressed to the priests and people in Judah and concerns the return of individuals and goods from exile; however, its hopeful tone differs from the other oracles in 27.2–18.

The narrative of Jer 28.1–17 can be divided into two minor 'episodes' in 28.1–11 and 28.12–17. I will treat 28.1–11 and 28.12–17 in two parts, though my reading and conclusions pertain to the narrative whole.

2. Jeremiah 27.1–15

The oracle from YHWH in Jer 27.1–11 is a message which supports the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and warns against resisting him. It primarily addresses the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon,⁶⁴⁸ Tyre and Sidon. These kings had sent emissaries to Jerusalem, and most interpreters understand this act as an attempt to form an alliance against Babylon. The text of 27.1 is corrupt since it sets the oracle during בראשית ממלכת ('the beginning of the reign') of Jehoakim but then refers to Zedekiah (27.3b, 12; cf. 28.1). The opening verses of 27.1–4 are cumbersome; a barrage of formulaic phrases envelop, like Russian nesting dolls, the prophet's oracle in layers of 'quotation marks'. For two prophetic messages in 27.2–3 and 27.5–11 there are five layers of speech-within-speech.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁸ These three kingdoms, Edom, Moab and Ammon are referred to together in Jer 9.25; 25.21; 40.11. Ammon, referred to as בני עמון ('the sons of Ammon'; cf. Gen 19.36–38), has an OAN in 49.1–6. Moabites and Ammonites are among the armies which attacked Jehoiakim in Judah according to 2 Kgs 24.2. Nebuchadnezzar is said to attack Ammon in Ezek 21.25, 33.

⁶⁴⁹ A summary of the levels of quotation in the communication chain is as follows: (1) word comes to Jeremiah (כה אמר יהוה) in Jer 27.1b; (2) there is a quotation formula (ביד מלאכים) in 27.2; (3) YHWH instructs Jeremiah to send to a group of kings by way of messengers (לאמר) in 27.4a; (4) YHWH tells Jeremiah what to say to the messengers (כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל) in 27.4b; (5) the speech directed to the messengers is introduced with another quotation formula (כה תאמרו אל אדניכם) in 27.4b; (6) a set of instructions are given directly to messengers (כה אמר יהוה) in 27.5; (7) the content of YHWH's speech to the kings follows in 27.5.

2.1. Text and translation

- (1) בראשית ממלכת⁶⁵⁰ יהויקים⁶⁵¹ בן יאושיהו מלך יהודה היה הדבר הזה אל ירמיה מאת יהוה לאמר
- (2) כה אמר יהוה אלי עשה לך מוסרות ומטות ונתתם על צווארך
- (3) ושלחתם⁶⁵² אל מלך אדום ואל מלך מואב ואל מלך בני עמון ואל מלך צר ואל מלך צידון ביד מלאכים⁶⁵³ הבאים ירושלם אל צדקיהו מלך יהודה
- (4) וצוית אתם אל אדניהם לאמר כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל כה תאמרו אל אדניכם
- (5) אנכי עשיתי את הארץ את האדם ואת הבהמה אשר על פני הארץ בכחי הגדול ובזרועי הנטויה ונתתיה לאשר ישר בעיני
- (6) ועתה אנכי נתתי את כל הארצות האלה ביד נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל עבדי וגם את חית השדה נתתי לו לעבדו
- (7) ועבדו אתו כל הגוים ואת בנו ואת בן בנו עד בא עת ארצו גם הוא ועבדו בו⁶⁵⁴ גוים רבים ומלכים גדלים
- (8) והיה הגוי והממלכה אשר לא יעבדו אתו את נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל ואת אשר⁶⁵⁵ לא יתן את צוארו בעל מלך בבל בחרב וברעב ובדבר אפקד על הגוי ההוא נאם יהוה עד תמי⁶⁵⁶ אתם בידו

⁶⁵⁰ BHS reads *בשנה הרביעית* in place of *בראשית ממלכת*. There is little text-critical support for emending this particular phrase; the *apparatus criticus* notes that all of Jer 27.1 is missing from Θ^* . This change adopts secondary evidence from 28.1 and the phrase *בשנה הרביעית* found there. It is possible that 27.1 is a scribal interpolation from 26.1, perhaps supplying a missing chronological heading for 27.2–22; Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, 14–15. As Tov cautions, ‘from the point of view of method it is very questionable to correct individual words in 27.1 (as in BHS), since those corrections do not solve the problems of meaning (except for one detail) of 26.1 and 27.1, or of the absence of the verse in the LXX.’ Tov, *Literary History, in: Empirical Models of Biblical Criticism*, ed. Tigay, Philadelphia, PA, 1985, 218 n. 25. Thus, while I interpret the context of 27.2–22 as Zedekiah’s reign, I do not emend this phrase in 27.1.

⁶⁵¹ BHS reads *לצדקיהו* in place of *יהויקים* in Jer 27.1. The *apparatus criticus* cites support from some Hebrew manuscripts and Θ , but this evidence is quite weak. Most of the text-critical evidence supports L (see Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle*, 665.). As it stands in L, 27.1 sets the reign of Jehoiakim as the context of the passage, only to address Zedekiah instead in 27.3, 12. I do not adopt this proposed change; see my comments above in note 650.

⁶⁵² BHS reads *ושלחת* for *ושלחתם*, citing support from Θ^L . This view appears to make more sense for Jeremiah to send a message rather than the actual yoke bars. The text-critical evidence does not affect L, so I read *ושלחתם* and do not follow the suggestion of BHS.

⁶⁵³ BHS reads *מלאכייהם* for *מלאכים* and cites Θ in support. Rudolph thinks a missing suffix here is ‘aufällig’; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177. Small harmonisations in (e.g. person, gender, number) in the versions do not necessarily indicate textual variants. See Tov, *Exegetical Notes*, ZAW 91 (1979), 81. I do not find it necessary to emend L here.

⁶⁵⁴ BHS reads *בו* for *בה*. Rudolph thinks *הוא* influences the masculine suffix here; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177. The difference is minor. I do not follow the reading of the *apparatus*.

⁶⁵⁵ BHS reads *ואשר* in place of *את אשר*. The combination is difficult; see Blau, *Angeblichen Gebrauch*, VT 4 (1954), 19; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 117. The same combination of *ואשר* appears elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (see GKC §117c). I do not find sufficient text-critical reasons to emend the text here.

⁶⁵⁶ BHS reads *תמי* for *תמי* and cites Θ in support. The verb *תמי* is a *qal* infinitive construct from *תמם* (‘be

- (9) ואתם אל תשמעו אל נביאיכם ואל קסמיכם ואל חלמתיכם⁶⁵⁷ ואל ענניכם ואל כשפיכם אשר הם אמרים אליכם לאמר לא תעבדו את מלך בבל
- (10) כי שקר הם נבאים לכם למען הרחיק אתכם מעל אדמתכם והדחתי אתכם ואבדתם
- (11) והגוי אשר יביא את צוארו בעל מלך בבל ועבדו והנחתיו על אדמתו נאם יהוה ועבדה וישב בה
- (12) ואל צדקיה מלך יהודה דברתי ככל הדברים האלה לאמר הביאו את צואריכם בעל מלך בבל ועבדו אותו ועמו וחיו
- (13) למה תמותו אתה ועמך בחרב ברעב ובדבר כאשר דבר יהוה אל הגוי אשר לא יעבד את מלך בבל
- (14) ואל תשמעו אל דברי הנבאים האמרים אליכם לאמר לא תעבדו את מלך בבל כי שקר הם נבאים לכם
- (15) כי לא שלחתים נאם יהוה והם נבאים בשמי לשקר למען הדיחי אתכם ואבדתם אתם והנבאים הנבאים לכם

- (1) In the accession year⁶⁵⁸ of Jehoiakim ben Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from YHWH, saying,
- (2) Thus said YHWH to me; make for yourself cords and yoke bars and set them upon your neck.
- (3) And send them the king of Edom, and the king of Moab, and the king of the sons of Ammon, and the king of Tyre, and the king of Sidon by the hand of messengers who are coming to Jerusalem to Zedekiah, king of Judah.
- (4) And command them to their masters, saying, Thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, thus shall you say to your masters, saying,
- (5) I myself made the earth, the human, and the beast on the surface of the earth by my great strength and by my outstretched arm, and I gave it to whom it is right in my eyes.
- (6) And now I myself gave all of these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezz-

complete'); in all other instances in the Hebrew Bible תָּמַם is used as an intransitive verb (cf. DCH VIII, 647 §7 for comment on Jer 27.8; Ps 64.7). According to Rudolph, in the phrase אֲתָם אֶתָּם, the verb 'gibt keinen Sinn'. Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 177. The text could be a corruption of the phrase עַד תָּמַם ('until their destruction') as found in 24.10 (Weippert, *Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 169.; Gesenius-Buhl, 882; HALOT II, 1754). To keep the intransitive sense, one solution is to read אֲתָם אֶתָּם ('I am done with them'), as proposed in DCH VIII, 647 §5b. In my view, there is insufficient evidence to emend the text; I read the phrase עַד תָּמַם אֲתָם with a transitive meaning, 'until I finish them'. Cf. Jer 14.15.

⁶⁵⁷ BHS reads חֲלֻמֵיכֶם for חֲלֻמֵיכֶם in L, and cites the versions in support of this reading. Apparently BHS feels that חֲלֻמֵיכֶם ('your dreams') fits awkwardly in a list of personnel. There are other ways to resolve this tension; Holladay suggests one could repoint the word as a feminine participle חֲלֻמוֹתֵיכֶם ('your dreaming women'). Holladay, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 113. Jer 29.8 warns against listening to נְבִיאֵיכֶם ('your prophets'), קְסָמֵיכֶם ('your diviners') and חֲלֻמֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר אֲתָם מְחַלְמִים ('the dreams they dream'). These words appear in the same order in 27.9, suggesting a relation between נְבִיאִים, קְסָמִים and dreams. I do not think the text should be emended.

⁶⁵⁸ See note 700 on page 178.

- ar, king of Babylon, my servant; even the beasts of the field I have given to him to serve him.
- (7) Every nation shall serve him, and his son, and the son of his son until the time comes for his land, and many nations and great kings will impose service upon him.
- (8) But the nation or the kingdom which will not serve him, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and which will not put its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, with sword, famine and pestilence I will visit upon that nation, oracle of YHWH, until I finish them by his hand.
- (9) And you, do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreams, your augurs or your sorcerers who say to you, saying, Do not serve the king of Babylon.
- (10) For it is a lie which they prophesy to you in order to remove you from your land; I will drive you out and you will be destroyed.
- (11) But the nation which brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will make it rest on its land, oracle of YHWH, and they will till it and they will dwell upon it.
- (12) And to Zedekiah, king of Judah, I spoke like all these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, and his people, and live.
- (13) Why should you die, you and your people, by sword, by famine and by pestilence, as YHWH said to the nation which will not serve the king of Babylon?
- (14) And do not listen to the words your prophets say to you, saying, Do not serve the king of Babylon, for it is a lie that they prophesy to you.
- (15) For I did not send them, oracle of YHWH, but they prophesy in my name for a lie, in order to drive you out and you, and the prophets who prophesy to you, be destroyed.

2.2. The yoke of Babylon

YHWH instructs Jeremiah in Jer 27.2 to make for himself a set of cords and yoke bars (מוסרות ומטות) and to wear them on his neck.⁶⁵⁹ This 'sign-act' is explained in the accompanying oracle in 27.5–11 as the nation which refuses to serve Babylon will be punished

⁶⁵⁹ For מוסרה ('bonds'), see HALOT I, 557; Gesenius¹⁸, 644. The word מוטה is rather uncommon in the Hebrew Bible, also appearing in a masculine form מוט. The masculine noun מוט can refer to a carrying frame (Num 4.10, 12) or a pole (Nah 1.13, Ps 66.9; 121.3). The feminine noun מוטה can refer to a yoke in the singular (Is 9.3; 58.6, 9; Jer 28.10, 12) as well as in the plural (Lev 26.13; Jer 27.2; 28.13; Ezek 34.27), and it can also refer to a carrying pole (Ezek 30.18; 1 Chr 15.15). For מטות ('yoke bars'), see HALOT I, 555. The form here in 27.2 is מטות from מוטה. Occurrences of the defective spelling are found in Lev 26.13; Is 9.3; Jer 27.2; 28.13; Ezek 34.27; Nah 1.13; the *plene* spelling is found in Is 58.6, 9; Jer 28.10, 12.

with sword, pestilence and famine (27.8).⁶⁶⁰ Prophets are known to have performed their oracles by using objects, physical gestures or strange behaviour along with oral explanations of the action. These non-verbal performances seemed to function primarily to add rhetorical weight and persuasiveness to prophetic communication.⁶⁶¹

Cords and yoke bars are parts of the apparatus of a yoke and are closely related to the lexeme על ('yoke'). The מוסרה and מטות are parts of the instrument used to bind animals together and harness their labour.⁶⁶² In connection to pastoral work these lexemes do not necessarily have negative connotations. Taken together in their agricultural context, the lexemes מוסרה, מטות and על refer to instruments used in everyday life to till and work land. A yoke is a productive agricultural instrument.⁶⁶³

In the context of Jer 27.5–11, the idea of wearing a yoke is not so positive, as it is used as a metaphor for service rendered to a foreign ruler. YHWH opens his message in 27.5 by asserting his power and authority as the one who made the earth, humans and beasts with his strength (בכחי הגדול ובזרועי הנטויה).⁶⁶⁴ YHWH does what he wills and gives the land to whomever he sees fit (לאשר ישר בעיני); this description is closely similar to the passage which compares YHWH to a potter in 18.4 (cf. 34.15). Since YHWH has given all of these lands to his servant Nebuchadnezzar, to whom YHWH has even given the beasts of the field to serve him, every nation must serve Babylon for two generations (27.6–8). A time will come for the land of Babylon to serve גוים רבים ('many nations') and מלכים גדלים ('great kingdoms'), but until then all nations are subject to the yoke of Babylon. Any גוי ('nation') or ממלכה ('kingdom') that does not serve Nebuchadnezzar and does not put the yoke of the king of Babylon on its neck will be punished (פקד) with sword, famine and pestilence.

⁶⁶⁰ Various combinations of the lexemes חרב ('sword'), רעב ('famine') and דבר ('pestilence') appear in Jeremiah (Jer 14.12; 21.7, 9; 24.10; 27.8, 13; 28.8; 29.17, 18; 32.24, 36; 34.17; 38.2; 42.17, 22; 44.13). For a detailed discussion, see Weippert, *Prosareden des Jeremiabuches*, 148–91.

⁶⁶¹ See the important work of Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, JSOTS 283, Sheffield, 1999. Sometimes these behaviours were viewed negatively, perhaps as 'eccentric' or 'folly and madness'. Nelson, Priestly Purity and Prophetic Lunacy, in: *The Priests in the Prophets*, ed. Grabbe and Bellis, JSOTS 408, London, 2004, 115–33.

⁶⁶² For a description, see Dalman II, 99–105.

⁶⁶³ This point is emphasised as well by Silver from a sociological point of view. See Silver, *Performing Domination / Theorizing Power*, *JANER* 14 (2014), 186–216.

⁶⁶⁴ See Jer 32.17.

Two of the central motifs in 27.5–11, wearing a yoke on one's neck and 'serving' (עבד) a superior, are commonly used as a metaphor for political or religious servitude or subservience.⁶⁶⁵ This is actually the most frequent use for the terms מוסרה, מטות and על in the Hebrew Bible, since only a few texts refer to yokes in an everyday, agricultural sense (Num 19.2; Deut 21.3; 1 Sam 6.7).⁶⁶⁶ In some cases the yoke metaphor is cast in strongly negative terms, especially when used for serving a foreign king (e.g. Deut 28.48; Jer 28.13–14). This is unsurprising since foreign rule could be harshly oppressive and would often result in economic hardship.

It is also the case in Jeremiah that the notion of 'serving' a king or god is described metaphorically by wearing a yoke. For example, in Jer 30.8–9 a word of salvation from YHWH to Israel and Judah uses the metaphor of the yoke to express a hopeful message of support (cf. Nah 1.13). YHWH will save the house of Jacob from foreign oppression and allow him to serve (עבד) YHWH and a Davidic king.⁶⁶⁷ When Israel and Judah 'serve' YHWH they will also 'serve' a Davidic king; the loyalty paid to a god and a king is the same. It is this view which is also present in 27.6, where YHWH expresses his support to Nebuchadnezzar. Surprising as it may be to see a foreign king called YHWH's servant in 27.6 (cf. 25.9; 43.10), the ideology of serving YHWH by serving his appointed king is known elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Ps 8.8).

The relationship between YHWH and Israel and Judah is described in pastoral terms in Jer 2.20–28, where the idea of loyalty is expressed through the metaphor of the yoke. In 5.5 the key phrase נתק מוסרות ('to break the bonds') indicates a rebellious act; in the context of 5.1–9 the yoke is connected with the ethical demands of YHWH's דרך ('way') and משפט ('justice'), and therefore the yoke metaphor is positive rather than oppressive.⁶⁶⁸

It is clear from Jer 27.11 that a positive outcome is expected for the nation that brings its neck under the king of Babylon's yoke and serves it. In one sense, the positive

⁶⁶⁵ See Gen 27.40; Lev 26.13; Deut 28.48; 1 Kgs 12.4, 9, 10, 11, 14; Isa 9.3; 10.27; 14.25; 47.6; Ezek 34.27; Hos 11.4; Lam 1.14; 3.27; 2 Chr 10.4, 9, 10, 11, 14. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 144.

⁶⁶⁶ The case is the same for מוסרה, which refers to literal bonds only in Job 39.5. Friebel, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 144.

⁶⁶⁷ Many think these verses are late additions inserted between Jer 30.5–7 and 30.10–11, but one should not overlook the fact that the notion of 'service' is very similar to that of 27.2 and 28.11. For examples and citations of the view that 30.8–9 are an insertion, see Becking, "I Will Break His Yoke", in: *New Avenues in the Study of the Old Testament*, ed. Woude, OTS 25, Leiden, 1989, 71–72.

⁶⁶⁸ See also Ps 2.3; 57.14. Becking, "I Will Break His Yoke", 76.

outcome is avoiding disaster; YHWH already warned the nations of the suffering which sword, famine and pestilence will bring to the nation that does not serve (27.8). Stronger still, YHWH offers assurances of salvation to the nation that does serve; he will make it rest upon its land (הנחתיו על אדמתו), where it will both till (עבדה) and dwell upon the land (ישב בה).⁶⁶⁹

A contrary point of view is found in Jer 27.9–10. Here YHWH instructs the Syro-Palestinian kings not to listen (שמע) to their religious specialists who tell them לא תעבדו (‘do not serve the king of Babylon’). This is, of course, the opposite of what YHWH has instructed Jeremiah to say (27.8, 11, 12, 17; 28.14; cf. 27.14), and YHWH rejects this message in 27.10. The ‘do not serve’ position is שקר (‘a lie’) and has dire consequences. The religious specialists prophesy this message so that the kings will be הרחיק אתכם מעל (‘removed from their land’), and YHWH himself declares הדחתי אתכם ואבדתם (‘I will banish you and make you perish’). Whatever intended outcome the religious specialists have in mind, YHWH will bring to completion the negative consequences.

Jeremiah addresses Zedekiah in Jer 27.12–15 with an oracle very similar to 27.8–11. Essentially the same message is given to the Syro-Palestinian kings and Zedekiah; serve Babylon and live, or resist and die (27.12–13).⁶⁷⁰ YHWH again warns that the outcome of refusing to serve Babylon is sword, famine and pestilence, and he asks למה תמותו אתה ועמך (‘why should you and your people die?’) to drive home the point. As YHWH has already said to the nation who refuses to serve (27.13b),⁶⁷¹ only destruction results from resisting Babylon.

Just as the Syro-Palestinian kings are warned against listening to their religious specialists, Zedekiah is also cautioned against listening to his prophets.⁶⁷² The prophets also say not to serve Babylon, and YHWH calls this message שקר as in 27.10.⁶⁷³ Common critiques against prophets follow in 27.15a; YHWH did not send (שלח) these prophets, but still they prophesy lies in his name. The result of their prophesying is similar to 27.11.

⁶⁶⁹ For occurrences where עבד takes אדמה as its object, giving the sense of tilling the ground, see Gen 2.5; 3.23; 4.2, 12; 2 Sam 9.10; Isa 30.24; Zech 13.5; Prov 12.11; 28.19; cf. Gen 2.15; Deut 28.39; Isa 23.10. See DCH VI, 210.

⁶⁷⁰ The life and death contrast is an additional element not found in Jer 27.1–11.

⁶⁷¹ Phrasing in Jer 27.8 and 27.14 are closely similar, though additional elements are found in 27.8. Both הגוי והממלכה (‘the nation or kingdom’) are warned in 27.8, and נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל (‘Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon’) is expanded with the reference to Nebuchadnezzar.

⁶⁷² I find little reason to agree with Lundbom’s view that the possessive suffix here ‘is to denigrate the prophets’. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 321.

⁶⁷³ The phrase כי שקר הם נבאים לכם is identical in Jer 27.8 and 27.14.

YHWH will drive off (נִדַּח *hiphil*) Zedekiah and the people (?), and they will perish (אָבַד) along with the prophets who prophesy to them.

2.3. Prophets and diviners

In Jer 27.9 YHWH warns the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon against listening to their religious specialists. The text assumes that prophets are not alone in consulting kings in their affairs whether positively (e.g. 27.4–8) or negatively (e.g. 27.12–18). All of these figures are depicted as advising their kings on political matters and saying not to serve Babylon (לֹא תַעֲבֹדוּ אֶת מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל).

After the lexeme נָבִיא in Jer 27.9 is the *qal* participle קְסָמִיכֶם ('your diviners'). Another identical form appears in 29.8 in parallel with נְבִיאֵיכֶם. In both cases YHWH warns against listening (שמע *qal*) to what these figures have to say. The nominal form קָסֵם appears in 14.14 where it is the object of a participial form of נָבִיא *hithpael*. It is negatively described in 14.14 as it is paired with אֱלִיל ('idol') and paralleled with חֲזוֹן שֶׁקֶר ('lying vision') and תְּרִמִּית לִבָּם ('deceit of their heart'). The word חֲלֻמֹּתֵיכֶם ('your dreams') is slightly different from the others in the list, since it does not appear to refer to an individual engaged in an activity.⁶⁷⁴ However, it is associated with the lexemes נָבִיא and קָסֵם *qal* in 29.8. The other divination-related lexemes in Jer 27.9, עֹנֵן ('augur')⁶⁷⁵ and כַּשָּׁף ('sorcerer'),⁶⁷⁶ only occur here.

None of the figures in Jer 27.9 are polemicised as such; rather they are understood to be engaged in the same communicative process as prophets. They are specialists whose function is to transmit information and knowledge about the divine will to others. What is criticised is the content of their message, not necessarily their methods for acquiring or transmitting it. In sum, the list has a rhetorical function in the literary context of 27.1–15. As Jeremiah advises these kings against refusing Babylon's yoke, he lists all the possible voices these kings could be listening to instead. Regardless of whether it is a prophet, a diviner, a dream, a magician or an augur, do not listen to them if they tell you to rebel. The consequences, according to YHWH, are too severe.

⁶⁷⁴ Cf. Holladay's suggestion to reposit the word as a feminine participle חֲלֻמֹּתֵיכֶם ('your dreaming women'). Holladay, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 113.

⁶⁷⁵ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 45–46.

⁶⁷⁶ The lexeme כַּשָּׁף is a *hapax legomenon*. See Gesenius¹⁸, 578. See Schmitt, *Magie im Alten Testament*, 107–22.

2.4. Summary

Using the metaphor of a yoke, Jeremiah encourages kings of Syria and Palestine, including Judah, to serve the king of Babylon in Jer 27.1–15. The metaphor describes this service in terms of agricultural labour. As productive agricultural instruments, such pastoral work is not necessarily negative; similar metaphors are used to describe the relationship between YHWH and Israel and Judah, loyalty is expressed through service.⁶⁷⁷

Other divinatory specialists have the opposite message the kings: do not serve (Jer 27.9, 14). The response to these messages in 27.10 and 27.14 is the same in both instances; this is classified as a lie being prophesied to them (כי שקר הם נבאים לכם). It is clear that the diviners listed in 27.9 are understood in the same conceptual terms as prophets. All of these individuals are engaged in the same intellectual activity of transmitting information concerning the divine will. Fischer, for example, comments that '[e]s ist gefährlich, *den Produkten der eigenen nächtlichen Phantasie* Glauben zu schenken, und mindestens genauso riskant, wie den beiden zuvor erwähnten religiösen »Spezialisten« zu vertrauen.'⁶⁷⁸ While prophecy has often been contrasted with 'primitive' practices found in neighbouring cultures, the distinction does not hold on a functional level.⁶⁷⁹ Even though several of the terms in 27.9 are found in Deut 13.2–6 and 18.9–22, the polemical character of the Deuteronomic texts is absent here in Jeremiah.

There is one clear conceptual difference, however, between the diviners in Jer 27.9 and the prophets in 27.14. YHWH claims that he did not send (שלח) the prophets in 27.15, although the prophesy in his name. Given the shared language in 27.10 and 27.15, it seems clear that the motif of 'being sent' is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא.

3. Jeremiah 27.16–22

Continuing from Jer 27.1–15, another word from YHWH is addressed to the priests and all the people in 27.16–18. These verses are also a message of caution and warning about serving Babylon and listening to prophets, but they introduce new themes and ideas

⁶⁷⁷ See Gen 27.40; Lev 26.13; Deut 28.48; 1 Kgs 12.4, 9, 10, 11, 14; Isa 9.3; 10.27; 14.25; 47.6; Ezek 34.27; Hos 11.4; Lam 1.14; 3.27; 2 Chr 10.4, 9, 10, 11, 14. Friebe, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 144.

⁶⁷⁸ Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, HThKAT, Freiburg, 2006, 55.

⁶⁷⁹ Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 47–48.

which are distinct from 27.1–15. There is no mention of the yoke of Babylon, but issues regarding the city of Jerusalem, its temple and the כלי בית יהוה ('vessels of the house of YHWH') are among the text's main concerns.

3.1. Text and translation

- (16) ואל הכהנים ואל כל העם הזה דברתי לאמר כה אמר יהוה אל תשמעו אל דברי נביאיכם הנבאים לכם לאמר הנה כלי בית יהוה מושבים מבבלה עתה מהרה כי שקר המה נבאים לכם
- (17) אל תשמעו אליהם עבדו את מלך בבל וחיו למה תהיה העיר הזאת חרבה
- (18) ואם נבאים הם ואם יש דבר יהוה אתם יפגעו נא ביהוה צבאות לבלתי באו⁶⁸⁰ הכלים הנותרים בבית יהוה ובית מלך יהודה ובירושלם בבבלה
- (19) כי כה אמר יהוה צבאות אל⁶⁸¹ העמדים ועל הים ועל המכנות ועל יתר הכלים הנותרים בעיר הזאת
- (20) אשר לא לקחם נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל בגלותו את יכוניה בן יהויקים מלך יהודה מירושלם בבבלה ואת כל חרי יהודה וירושלם
- (21) כי כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל על הכלים הנותרים בית יהוה ובית מלך יהודה וירושלם
- (22) בבבלה יובאו ושמה יהיו עד יום פקדי אתם נאם יהוה והעליתם והשיבתם אל המקום הזה
- (16) And to the priests and all this people I have spoken, saying, Thus said YHWH, Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold the vessels of the house of YHWH will be returned from Babylon very soon', because it is a lie they prophesy to you.
- (17) Do not listen to them. Serve the king of Babylon and live. Why should this city be a waste?
- (18) If they are prophets, and if a word of YHWH is with them, let them intercede with YHWH of Hosts so that the remaining vessels in the house of YHWH, and the house of the king of Judah, and in Jerusalem would not go to Babylon.
- (19) So thus said YHWH of Hosts concerning the pillars, and the basin, and the stands, and the rest of the remaining vessels in this city,
- (20) which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, did not take when he exiled

⁶⁸⁰ BHS reads יָבֹאוּ for בָּאוּ in L. Typically לַבְלִיתִי is the negative of the infinitive construct, sometimes a *yiqtol* verb (GKC §152x; see Exod 20.20). The perfect tense verb here is incorrect (Joüon-Muraoka §160l; GKB, §28b). See also Jer 23.14. For these grammatical reasons, I adopt the reading proposed in the *apparatus criticus*.

⁶⁸¹ BHS reads (*probabiliter*) אֶל for עַל. On the phrase אֶל (עַבְדוֹת) (Jer 22.6; 23.2, 15; 27.21; 36.28), see Seebass, *Jeremias Konflikt mit Chananja*, ZAW 82 (1970), 415 n. 16; Tov, *Exegetical Notes*, 89. It seems unnecessary to emend the text here, since the prepositions עַל and אֶל are used interchangeably in Jeremiah. Fischer, *Jeremia* 26–52, 51. I do not adopt the change proposed in BHS.

- Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;
- (21) for thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, concerning the remaining vessels of the house of YHWH and the house of the king of Judah and Jerusalem;
- (22) to Babylon they will be brought and there they will be until the day of my visitation to them, oracle of YHWH; and I will bring them up, and I will return them to this place.

3.2. The temple vessels

Jer 27.16 opens with a reference to YHWH's message to the priests and all the people. YHWH has spoken (דבר) to them regarding their prophets, that they should not listen (שמע) to the words of their prophets, who are giving hopeful messages about the return of the כלי בית יהוה from Babylon. Apparently, Nebuchadnezzar had taken valuable items from the temple after conquering the city (2 Kgs 25.13–17 = Jer 52.17–23; 2 Chr 36.7, 18; Dan 1.2; Jer 28.3, 6), some of which were so large they were broken to pieces in order to transport (see 2 Kgs 24.13 = 2 Chr 28.13).⁶⁸² The message of the prophets is that these instruments will return soon from Babylon. As 27.17 indicates, the message of the prophets is incompatible with the 'submit and live' position (27.12). Rather than listen to the prophets, YHWH tells the priests and people to serve the king of Babylon and live. Otherwise the city will become a waste (תהיה חרבה).

A final section of text in Jer 27.19–22 rounds out the chapter. Unlike the previous sections of text, there is no audience specified in 27.19. There is not much here that directly pertains to prophets, however, the additional references to cultic objects indicates the significance to this domain to prophets—especially as seen in the narrative of 28.1–11. These verses contain a word of doom about the cultic paraphernalia remaining in Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar's first conquest of the city. According to 52.17, 20–21, these items were all made of bronze and were of enormous size (cf. 1 Kgs 7.23; 2 Kgs 16.17; 25.13, 16; 1 Chron 18.8). Jer 27.22 expresses both judgment and hope: YHWH says that all of the remaining instruments in Jerusalem will be taken to in Babylon, but they will remain there only until YHWH takes notice of them (עד יום פקדי אתם). The vessels will not re-

⁶⁸² Becking, בלי, in: בלי Database: Utensils in the Hebrew Bible, ed. Moor, in cooperation with B. E. J. H. Becking and M. Korpel. Het Oudtestamentisch Werkgezelshap in Nederland en België, <http://www.otw-site.eu/KLY/kly.php>, 2010–14,

main in Babylon forever. YHWH will restore them to Jerusalem, here referred to as המקום הזה.⁶⁸³

3.3. Prophets and intercession

One debate in prophetic scholarship concerns the issue of intercession, and whether or not the prophets should be understood as having a formal or official role as ‘intercessors’.⁶⁸⁴ In Jer 27.18 one of the terms related to this idea appears in YHWH’s word concerning the prophets who assure a swift return of the temple vessels. The lexeme פגע *qal* is related to the semantic field of divine consultation, and in Jeremiah is used twice to describe ‘making a request of’ or ‘begging’ the deity (7.16; 27.18).⁶⁸⁵

In Jer 27.18, YHWH encourages the prophets to intercede (פגע *qal*) with him so that the cultic vessels would remain in the Jerusalem temple. The prophets with whom 27.18 is concerned are the ones who in 27.16 claim that the vessels of the house of YHWH will be returned from Babylon very soon. The structure of the verse is built upon two conditional clauses introduced by אם (‘if’), which set similar ideas in parallel. If they are prophets (אם הם נבאים הם) and if YHWH’s word is with them (אם יש דבר יהוה אתם), then they will act in a certain manner. Should both conditions be the case, then the prophets are encouraged to intercede with YHWH of Hosts; here the phrase פגע נא is a *qal* jussive. The situation described in Jer 27.16–22 is that the various vessels of the temple and the royal house are scattered between Jerusalem and Babylon. There is both an expression of hope that the remaining vessels will stay, and that the taken ones will return.

⁶⁸³ For the precise phrase המקום הזה, see Jer 7.20; 28.3–4, 6; 29.10; 32.37; 40.2; 51.62. For המקום הזה, see additionally 16.9; 19.3–4; 22.11; 24.5; 28.3; 42.18.

⁶⁸⁴ Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*, 113–14; Jacob, *Prophètes et intercesseurs*, in: *De la Tôrah au Messie*, ed. Carrez, Doré, and Grelot, Paris, 1981, 205–16; Balentine, *Prophet as Intercessor*, *JBL* 103 (1984), 161–73. In Jeremiah this debate extends to the nature of the so-called ‘confessions’, usually Jer 11.18–12.6; 15.10–12, 15–21; 17.9–10, 14–18; 18.18–23; 20.7–12, 14–18 (cf. 4.19–21; 8.18–23; 10.19–23; 13.17; 14.17–18; 23.9). Some see intercessory activity reflected in the vivid, emotional language and the use of the first-person to address YHWH in these texts. See, e.g., Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich*; Kilunga, *Prééminence de YHWH*, OBO 254, Fribourg/Göttingen, 2011, 25–31. For studies that approach the confessions as complex, multilayered compositions, see Bezzel, *Konfessionen Jeremias*, 1–10. Some still understand these as a ‘biography’ of Jeremiah; cf., e.g., Barbiero, «*Tu mi hai sedotto, Signore*», *AnBib. Studia* 2, Roma, 2013, 285–89.

⁶⁸⁵ An additional instance in Jer 36.25 describes an instance of begging directed toward a human subject, namely the king. The *hithpael* form הפגעתיו in 15.11 is problematic, and though it involves YHWH, should be excluded since it does not describe a human making a request of the deity. There are also textual difficulties in 15.11. See Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 734; Thelle, *Ask God*, 243–44; Fischer, *Jeremiah 1–25*, 503. Cf. Ittmann, *Die Konfessionen Jeremias*, 47–48.

As mentioned above, the semantic field of פָּגַע *qal* involves making a request of the deity,⁶⁸⁶ and it is used with this sense twice in Jeremiah. In 7.16 YHWH instructs Jeremiah against interceding on behalf of the people because he will not listen (שָׁמַע *qal*). Three verbs appear in parallel, describing the same activity, as YHWH says not to pray (הִתְפַּלֵּל *hith-pael*) for the people, not to raise up (נָשָׂא *qal*) a cry or a prayer, and not to beg of him (פָּגַע *qal*).⁶⁸⁷ The severity of YHWH's intransigence in 7.16 is widely noted, but as Thelle rightly points out, the prohibition in 7.16 is severe because YHWH refuses to act as the people would normally expect.⁶⁸⁸ It is also important to note the placement of the prohibition in 7.16 immediately following the first part of the 'temple sermon' in 7.1–15. YHWH's instruction not to pray or intercede also assume that these are normal parts of the process of repentance. The rejection of intercession in 7.16 thus has a specific rhetorical function, namely, to sharpen the criticisms which precede it. In other words, the cultic abuses listed in 7.1–15 are of such severity that the usual route to repentance is interrupted; even the process by which the people can negotiate salvation is threatened by their cultic failures.⁶⁸⁹

In a very similar fashion, it is an implicit expectation in Jer 27.18 that interceding (פָּגַע *qal*) with YHWH would be a normal prophetic response to the situation at hand. One reading of the passage sees the two אִם clauses as sarcastic contrary-to-fact statements. The sense of the two phrases then is mocking: if the prophets really do have YHWH's word—and they don't—then let them go ahead and try to beg YHWH. While there are polemical statements in Jeremiah against prophets who do not have the word of YHWH

⁶⁸⁶ Similar texts in Jeremiah describe a process of divine consultation with דָּרַשׁ (Jer 21.2), שָׁאַל (37.17; 38.14), and פָּלַל (37.3; 42.2). On the particular dynamics these verbs involve, see Thelle, *Ask God*, 192–202.

⁶⁸⁷ The prohibition in Jer 7.16 is similar to the statement in 15.1 that YHWH would not relent even if Moses or Samuel stood (עָמַד *qal*) in his presence, presumably to intercede with him. Also similar is the instruction YHWH gives Jeremiah in 14.11 not to pray for the benefit of the people (אֵל תִּתְפַּלֵּל בְּעַד הָעָם הַזֶּה) (לְטוֹבָה). See my comments on this passage in chapter 4, section 4.2, page 146.

⁶⁸⁸ Thelle, *Ask God*, 173.

⁶⁸⁹ 'Broadly speaking, as is well known, one finds in much of the prophetic literature an alternation between oracles of judgment and oracles of salvation. In Jeremiah 7, 11 and 14, one finds, instead of an oracle of salvation or promise, the prohibition to intercede, like a smack in the face. It is in fact very rewarding to view these texts as a disappointment of an expected alternation between oracles of judgment and the call to repentance.' Thelle, *Ask God*, 182, see also 183–84.

(i.e. 5.13),⁶⁹⁰ it is not apparent that the two clauses in 27.18 are negative. The prophets really are encouraged to intercede with YHWH.⁶⁹¹

3.4. Summary

A kind of political philosophy is articulated in the ‘submit and live’ message of Jer 27.16–22. As in 27.1–15, Jeremiah addresses another group who has other prophets giving different advice; here the priests and all the people are in view (cf. 26.12, 16). These prophets prophesy lies (cf. 27.10, 14), and the priests and people are warned **אל תשמעו** (‘do not listen’) to them (cf. 27.9, 14, 16).

The prophets who disagree with Jeremiah are encouraged to intercede (**פגע** *qal*) with YHWH. Some read this statement somewhat sarcastically, as if Jeremiah is goading his opponents with a task they cannot perform.⁶⁹² However, this is not a necessary reading, as his disagreement with other prophets does not imply that they cannot intercede with YHWH. There has been some debate concerning an intercessory role in Israelite conceptions of prophecy,⁶⁹³ but recent studies show that, while not an ‘office’ or an act restricted to prophets, intercession is a normal prophetic behaviour.⁶⁹⁴

4. Jeremiah 28.1–11

Following a chronological notice in Jer 28.1a, the text of 28.1–11 reports how the prophet Hananiah ben Azzur of Gibeon spoke in the Jerusalem temple. Of the 37 instances of the construction ‘[Personal Name], the prophet’, a dozen of them appear in 28.1–17.⁶⁹⁵ Hananiah delivers a word from YHWH in the audience of the priests and all the people in 28.2–4,

⁶⁹⁰ Compare the phrase **והדבר אין בהם** in Jer 5.13.

⁶⁹¹ This is similar to the case in Jer 23.22, where the phrase **אם עמדו בסודי** should not be read as a contrary-to-fact statement.

⁶⁹² Fischer, *Jeremia* 26–52, 60.

⁶⁹³ Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*, 109–20; Boer, *De voorbede in het Oude Testament*, OTS 3, Leiden, 1943; Hesse, *Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament*, Erlangen, 1951; Thelle, *Ask God*, 117–19. In some studies, the idea of a particular intercessory ‘office’ is connected to a cultic office or role. See, e.g., Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich*; Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*.

⁶⁹⁴ Thelle, *Ask God*, 117–61; Tiemeyer, *Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?*

⁶⁹⁵ They are **ירמיה הנביא** (Jer 28.5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 15) and **חנניה הנביא** (28.1, 5, 10, 12, 15, 17). See my discussion in chapter 2, section 1.2.1, page 43. Other named individuals are the subject of verbal forms of **נבא** in Jeremiah: Pashhur ben Immer (Jer 20.1–6), Micah of Moresheth (26.18–19), Uriah ben Shemaiah (26.20–23), Hananiah ben Azzur (28.1–17), Ahab ben Kolaiah and Zedekiah ben Maaseiah (29.21–23), Shemaiah the Nehe-lamite (29.24–32), and Jeremiah of Anathoth (11.21[?]; 20.1; 25.13, 30; 26.9, 12; 29.27).

Jeremiah responds to Hananiah's oracle in 28.5–9, and 28.10–11 records Hananiah's response. In the temple setting, there are frequent indications of the presence of an audience with the phrase **לעיני הכהנים וכל העם** (28.2, 5, 11, 15). A specific location within the temple is not apparent, though it is likely to be the outer courts. Perspective in the narrative shifts from the first person in 28.1 (**אמר אלי**) to the third person in 28.5.

4.1. Text and translation

- (1) ויהי בשנה ההיא בראשית ממלכת צדקיה מלך יהודה בשנת⁶⁹⁶ הרבעית⁶⁹⁷ בחדש החמישי אמר אלי⁶⁹⁸ חנניה בן עוזר הנביא אשר מגבעון בבית יהוה לעיני הכהנים וכל העם לאמר
- (2) כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל לאמר שברתי את על מלך בבל
- (3) בעוד שנתים ימים אני משיב אל המקום הזה את כל כלי בית יהוה אשר לקח נבוכדנאצר מלך בבל מן המקום הזה ויביאם בבל
- (4) ואת יכניה בן יהויקים מלך יהודה ואת כל גלות יהודה הבאים בבלה אני משיב אל המקום הזה נאם יהוה כי אשבר את על מלך בבל
- (5) ויאמר ירמיה הנביא אל חנניה הנביא לעיני הכהנים ולעיני כל העם העמדים בבית יהוה
- (6) ויאמר ירמיה הנביא אמן כן יעשה יהוה יקם יהוה את דברך אשר נבאת להשיב כלי בית יהוה וכל הגולה מבבל אל המקום הזה
- (7) אך שמע נא הדבר הזה אשר אנכי דבר באזניך ובאזני כל העם
- (8) הנביאים אשר היו לפני ולפניך מן העולם וינבאו אל ארצות רבות ועל ממלכות גדולות למלחמה ולרעה ולדבר
- (9) הנביא אשר ינבא לשלום בבא דבר הנביא יודע הנביא אשר שלחו יהוה באמת
- (10) ויקח חנניה הנביא את המוטה מעל צואר ירמיה הנביא וישברהו⁶⁹⁹
- (11) ויאמר חנניה לעיני כל העם לאמר כה אמר יהוה ככה אשבר את על נבכדנאצר מלך בבל בעוד שנתים ימים מעל צואר כל הגוים וילך ירמיה הנביא לדרכו

⁶⁹⁶ K **בשנת**, Q **בשנה**. It appears that the Masorah of K is a mixture of absolute (**בשנה**) and construct (**בשנת**) forms (GKC §134p; see note 28.1^b in BHS; cf. Jer 32.1 K **בשנת**, Q **בשנה**). The use of a construct in K is an example of genitives 'added to the construct state as nearer definitions' (GKC §128k; see also König §337r, cf. §315f). In my view, Q is the better reading (GKC §134p; IBHS §15.3.1).

⁶⁹⁷ BHS reads **בשנת הרבאית** in place of **בשנה הרבאית** **לצדקיה מלך יהודה** in L, and cites 6*. It is difficult to justify emendations to particular phrases in Jer 28.1; see my comments for 27.1, especially regarding the view of Tov, in note 650 on page 164. The combination of **בשנה ההיא** and **בשנה** is awkward, but not impossible, as **בשנה ההיא** seems to refer back to 27.3 (cf. 49.34); see McKane, *Jeremiah xxvi–lii*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1996, 709–10. Thus, I do not adopt the reading of the *apparatus criticus*.

⁶⁹⁸ BHS reads the preposition **אלי** as an abbreviation **אלי-ירמיה** and notes the shift to the third person in Jer 28.5. Rudolph calls **אלי** an 'offenbar falsche Auflösung' and suggests this alternative for **אלי** 'falls es nicht überhaupt zu streichen ist.' Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 178. In my view, this suggestion is rather speculative and ought not be followed.

⁶⁹⁹ BHS suggests reading **וישברהו** for **וישברה** in L. Though there is a lack of gender agreement between the verb suffix (**-הו**) and its object (**מוטה**), such minor inconsistencies are not uncommon. They also do not necessarily indicate textual variants; see Tov, *Exegetical Notes*, 81. It is not necessary to emend L here.

- (1) In that year, the accession year⁷⁰⁰ of Zedekiah, king of Judah, in the fourth year, the fifth month, Hananiah ben Azzur, the prophet from Gibeon, spoke to me in the house of YHWH in the presence of the priests and all the people, saying,
- (2) Thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.
- (3) Within two years I myself am returning to this place all the vessels of the house of YHWH, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, took from this place and brought to Babylon.
- (4) And Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all the exiles of Judah who came to Babylon I myself am returning to this place, oracle of YHWH, for I have broken the yoke of Babylon.
- (5) And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people who were standing in the house of YHWH;
- (6) And the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen, may YHWH do so;⁷⁰¹ may YHWH establish these words which you have prophesied, to return the vessels of the house of YHWH and all the exiles from Babylon to this place.
- (7) Still, hear this word which I myself speak in your ear and in the ears of all the people:
- (8) The prophets who were before me and before you from long ago prophesied to many lands and great kingdoms concerning war, and disaster, and pestilence.
- (9) The prophet who prophesies concerning well-being—when the word of the prophet comes, the prophet will be known, whom YHWH truly sent.
- (10) And Hananiah, the prophet, took the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah, the prophet, and he broke it.
- (11) And Hananiah said in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus said YHWH, thus will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, within two years from the neck of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went on his way.

⁷⁰⁰ The phrase רשית ממלכה appears to be a technical term, similar to Babylonian *rēš šarrūti* and Akkadian *šurrāt šarrūti*, meaning accession year. See also Aramaic ראש מלוכתא in AP 6.1 (Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri*, Oxford, 1923, 15-18) and ראש מלכות in the Wadi Daliyeh papyrus (Cross, *Samaria Papyri*, BA 26 (1963), 113; Friebe, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 138).

⁷⁰¹ Here the verb יעשה is a *qal* imperfect which is translated as a jussive (cf. the *hiphil* imperfect jussive יקם). The imperfect can often replace a jussive to express a willed, contingent action or event. See GKC §107n.

4.2. Jeremiah and Hananiah, part I

Speaking before the priests and people in the Jerusalem temple, Hananiah gives an oracle in Jer 28.2–4 that opens with a standard introduction: **כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל**. Hananiah's message is both an oracle of doom against Babylon and an oracle of salvation for Judah. His word focuses on two primary themes: breaking the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, and the return of people and goods to Jerusalem from Babylon. There are a number of repetitions in style and phrasing in 28.2–4, and these are easier to observe when the text is presented as an outline. Consider the following presentation of the oracle:

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 28.2a | Thus says YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, saying |
| 28.2b | I have broken the yoke (שִׁבְרֹתִי אֶת עֹל) of the king of Babylon |
| 28.3a | In two years' time, I will return to this place (מָשִׁיב אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה) |
| | The vessels of the house of YHWH |
| 28.3b | which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, took |
| | from this place (מִן הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה) |
| 28.4a | and Jeconiah ben Jehoiakim, king of Judah, and all |
| | the exiles of Judah who went to Babylon |
| | I will return to this place (מָשִׁיב אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה) |
| 28.4b | For I will break the yoke (אֲשַׁבֵּר אֶת עֹל) of the king of Babylon |

Themes from Jer 27.1–15 are repeated in Hananiah's message. Contrary to 27.5–8, 11–12, where YHWH encourages submitting to Babylonian rule, here YHWH says he has broken (**שִׁבַּר** *qal*) the yoke of the king of Babylon. The thrust of YHWH's message in 28.2–4 is very similar to 27.22 as it concerns the vessels of the temple.⁷⁰² Where YHWH says **הַשִּׁיבִתִּים אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** in 27.22, twice the phrase **מָשִׁיב אֶל הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה** assures their return in 28.3–4.

The chapters Jer 27–28 are peculiarly interested in the fate of cultic instruments from the temple of YHWH, which are mentioned only sparingly in the book.⁷⁰³ More de-

⁷⁰² Twice the word **שִׁבַּר** is used with **עֹל** as its object. The phrase **שִׁבְרֹתִי עֹלְךָ נִתְקִיתִי מוֹסְרֹתַיִךְ** in Jer 2.20 introduces the reasons for which YHWH declares judgment in the rest of the passage. Here the metaphor of breaking a yoke and tearing off bonds is used in a religious polemic. The same phrase from 2.20 appears in 5.5, where 'the great' are rebuked because **שִׁבְרוּ עַל נִתְקוּ מוֹסְרוֹת** and here the phrase has additional poetic resonance with a wordplay between **מוֹסֵר** ('correction') in v. 3 and **מוֹסְרוֹת** ('bonds') in v. 5. In both Jer 2.20 and 5.5 the key phrase **נִתַּק מוֹסְרוֹת** ('to break the bonds') indicates a rebellious act of rejecting authority. See also Ps 2.3; 57.14. Becking, "I Will Break His Yoke", 76.

⁷⁰³ See Jer 27.16, 18, 19, 21; 28.3, 6; 52.18, 20.

tails of YHWH's plan are announced by Hananiah in Jer 28.3–4a. After two years' time, YHWH declares that he will bring back (שוב *hiphil*) all of the temple instruments which Nebuchadnezzar took to Babylon. Hananiah uses the phrase המקום הזה twice in 28.3 to refer to the Jerusalem temple, much like YHWH's promise to return the vessels אל המקום ('to this place') in 27.22.⁷⁰⁴ In addition to the vessels of the temple, YHWH announces he will return Jeconiah and all of the exiles (כל גלות יהודה) from Babylon.⁷⁰⁵

The theme of the yoke is then reprised as it forms an *inclusio* in Jer 28.2b and 28.4b. YHWH declares he has broken (שבר *qal* perfect) the yoke of the king of Babylon in 28.2b, and in 28.4b he assures that he will break (שבר *qal* imperfect) the yoke.

The narrative continues in Jer 28.5 where the character of the prophet Jeremiah is introduced. He affirms Hananiah's oracle, also in the presence of the priests and people. A new detail is added in 28.5, though, as the audience is described as standing (עמד) in the temple of YHWH. This may refer to a technical or cultic act, or it may indicate to the 'official' status of the audience. Neither option is incontestable, but small variations in the midst of repetitions in the text ought not be ignored. Another detail, in contrast to Hananiah's speech in 28.2–4, Jeremiah's speech is not marked with a formulaic phrase to indicate divine speech.

Jeremiah's response follows in Jer 28.6–9. Again, his words lack a formula indicating divine speech. Almost all commentators are struck by Jeremiah's initial response in 28.6.⁷⁰⁶ He affirms Hananiah's message with two phrases including jussive verbs: אמן כן ('amen, may YHWH do so'), and יקם יהוה את דבריך אשר נבאת ('may YHWH establish your words which you prophesied').⁷⁰⁷ Because Hananiah's message contradicts 27.5–8, 11–12, some explanation must account for Jeremiah's positivity. His formal language, the importance of the location, the seriousness of the content, the use of 'official' titles, and the public context all hint at a ritual response.

It is at this point that a short comment is in order on the 'formal' and 'ritual' features of the text I have mentioned. One of the problems identified in this pericope is the

⁷⁰⁴ For the precise phrase המקום הזה, see Jer 7.20; 28.3–4, 6; 29.10; 32.37; 40.2; 51.62. For המקום הזה, see additionally 16.9; 19.3–4; 22.11; 24.5; 28.3; 42.18.

⁷⁰⁵ For the phrase גלות יהודה, cf. Jer 24.5.

⁷⁰⁶ See, e.g. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 203; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 179.

⁷⁰⁷ Along with many commentators, I translate the imperfect verb יעשה as a jussive. See translation above. This is only one of two instances of אמן כן in Jeremiah (cf. Jer 11.5). For other instances of the phrase כן יעשה יהוה, though with imperfect verbs, see Deut 3.21; 7.19.

prolific use of titles within it. In most instances, the use of נביא as a title in Jeremiah is dismissed as a secondary expansion; for example, of the 31 times Jeremiah is called a נביא, only four are found in the Greek versions.⁷⁰⁸ In this view, Jer 28.1–17 is a case in point: Hananiah and Jeremiah are called a נביא six times each, while the Greek only records Hananiah as a ψευδοπροφήτης in 28.1 (= 35.1).⁷⁰⁹ Thus, according to Gonçalves, the Greek version ‘témoigne ainsi d’une version de la dispute qui ne considèrerait pas encore Jérémie prophète’, and the Masoretic text ‘témoigne ainsi de la consécration de Jeremie comme prophète.’⁷¹⁰ However, Cryer pointed to the ritual significance of location, titles, and audience in ‘the “priestly” capacity of Israelite prophets.’⁷¹¹ The key piece of evidence is Hananiah’s use of a time limit for his oracle in 28.3. According to Cryer, this time limit has a formal similarity to more ‘technically’ oriented divinatory methods.

The formal characteristics of this passage suggest to Cryer that it may be related to the question of whether or not the ‘omen sacrifice’ (i.e. extispicy or hepatoscopy) was practiced in ancient Israel. The view that it was at least known in Israel has won some impressive support in the past, as Gunkel and Mowinckel held this view, and more recently Loretz has supported the claim based on evidence from Ugarit.⁷¹² Cryer reassessed the possibility on the basis of texts ‘which refer to a clearly defined omen consultation’: Judg 18.2–24; 20.18–28; 1 Sam 9.22–24; 14.2–19, 35–37; 21.2–7; 23.1–12; 30.7–8; 2 Sam 2.1; 21.1; 24.11–15.⁷¹³ These texts all ‘reveal an impressive array of formal similarities’, where in every instance, and sometimes quite artificially, they signal the location, time, cultic equipment, technical language, personnel, and enquirers involved in the consultation.⁷¹⁴ In Jer 28.1–11, many of the same features are present:

- 1) the name of the diviner in question (Hananiah ben Azzur) 2) the date 3) the place (in the house of Yahweh) 4) the prediction 5) the enquirers (v 1: the priests

⁷⁰⁸ Jer 42.2; 43.6; 45.1; 51.59. (= 35.1; 28.59; 49.2; 50.6; 51.31).

⁷⁰⁹ Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 176–77; Stipp, Prophetentitel und Eigenname.

⁷¹⁰ Gonçalves, Les « Prophètes Écrivains », 177.

⁷¹¹ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 293.

⁷¹² Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, I, SVSK.HF 1921/4, Kristiania, 1921, 145–46; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 5. Auflage, GHK.AT I/1, Göttingen, 1922, 43; Loretz, *Leberschau, Sündenbock, Asasel in Ugarit und Israel*, UBL 3, Altenberge, 1985, 26, 81–112. For these and additional references, see Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 295–305; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 47–48.

⁷¹³ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 298.

⁷¹⁴ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 299–301.

and all the people) 6) the *adannu* of the prediction (v 3: within 2 years)⁷¹⁵

For Cryer, these features are all similar to diviner's protocols found throughout the ancient Near East, the best examples of which come from the Neo-Assyrian period.⁷¹⁶ These similarities do not suggest that the texts are remarkably early; Cryer takes the opposite view, that they are late, since they are 'reluctant to affirm that we actually have to do with extispicy.' Rather, they show that the traditions in the Hebrew Bible were familiar with the omen sacrifice, and this provides a 'formal model' for the interpretation of the texts. Similarly, I do not think that Jer 28.1–11 shows any indication of an actual omen sacrifice. Instead it does show that formal procedures evident in the text can be explained on the basis of known divinatory practices which were at least known, if not practiced, in ancient Israel. More to the point in the present investigation, the conclusion to be drawn from this parallel is that '[t]his observation alone is sufficient to bring into question the separate status of at least some of the Israelite prophets from their priestly colleagues.'⁷¹⁷

Returning back to the 'flow' of the narrative, in Jer 28.7, Jeremiah's apparent acceptance of Hananiah's message is more qualified than his initial אִמֵּן. A contrastive 'however' (אֲדָ) begins his request for Hananiah to listen (שָׁמַע נָא) to what he has to say. Again, there are no indications of a quotation of divine speech as Jeremiah asks Hananiah to listen to his word (הַדְּבָר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי דֹבֵר). Again, the language is formal and the presence of an audience is acknowledged. Jeremiah speaks his word to Hananiah and all the people, but the priests are unmentioned (cf. 28.1, 5). Jeremiah then proceeds to respond without at all addressing the specifics of Hananiah's oracle. Instead, he offers a general word which has to do with prophetic activity itself.⁷¹⁸

Following Jeremiah's statement on prophecy, Hananiah performs a sign-act where he takes the yoke bars (מוֹטָה) from Jeremiah's neck and Hananiah breaks them (cf. Jer 27.2).⁷¹⁹ The text offers no detail as to how Hananiah does this, leading some to speculate

⁷¹⁵ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 294.

⁷¹⁶ "To be brief, if we seek a model of divinatory report from the ancient Near East in which such features as the location, the time, the deity... the enquirer, the officiant, and even the technical terms "to enquire" (Heb. שָׁאַל) and "to draw near" (Heb. קָרַב) are attested, the Neo-Assyrian "query" texts provide good subjects for comparison.' Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 302. The relevant texts cited by Cryer have been published recently in Starr, *Queries to the Sun-god*, SAA 4, Helsinki, 1990. For a discussion of their formal features, see pp.xvi–xxix.

⁷¹⁷ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 294.

⁷¹⁸ See section 4.3, page 183.

on the strength required of Hananiah to perform such an action,⁷²⁰ whether he used a particular technique,⁷²¹ or acquired a kind of wild strength from a state of ecstasy.⁷²² None of these concerns are expressed in the narrative in 28.10–11. What is clear from the text is the symbolic importance of the act. Hananiah's sign-act derives its meaning from this context, not from its impressiveness as a feat of strength. Hananiah 'performs' his oracle to give it more rhetorical and persuasive power.⁷²³

Speaking in the audience of all the people, Hananiah interprets his sign-act.⁷²⁴ In the same way that Hananiah broke Jeremiah's yoke, YHWH will break (שבַר *qal* imperfect) Nebuchadnezzar's yoke (cf. 28.4b).⁷²⁵ Promising the same two year time frame found in 28.3a, YHWH will break the yoke from the neck of all the nations (מַעַל צוֹאֵר כָּל הַגּוֹיִם). Hananiah is making claims for YHWH's authority beyond Judah, in a real sense functioning like a נְבִיא לְגוֹיִם (cf. 1.5). This part of the chapter's narrative in 28.1–11 ends simply with Jeremiah going his own way (לְדַרְכּוֹ). The description is rather understated, and does not reveal much of anything concerning Jeremiah's reasons for leaving.

4.3. Prophecy according to Jeremiah

One of the most unique statements regarding the nature and function of prophecy in Jeremiah is Jer 28.8–9.⁷²⁶ It is a general description on the prophetic tradition put on the mouth of Jeremiah, and it bears great significance for the interpretation of the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah. As such, it merits close attention here.

In the narrative context of Jer 28.1–11, Jeremiah's statement on prophecy occurs in his response to Hananiah's oracle in 28.2–4. After indicating the presence of the audience in 28.5, the narrative reports again that Jeremiah spoke without a formula indicating di-

⁷¹⁹ There is a gender disagreement between the feminine מוֹטָה and the 3ms suffix on וַיִּשְׁבְּרָהּ ('and he broke it').

⁷²⁰ Most recently, see Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 257.

⁷²¹ See Selms, *Jeremia*, II, POuT, Nijkerk, 1974, 47.

⁷²² Duhm, *Jeremia*, 225. Weiser connects Hananiah's act to the statement in 1 Kgs 18.46 where יְהוָה הִיטָה (the hand of YHWH came over Elijah). Weiser, *Jeremia* 25,15 - 52,34, 247 n. 2.

⁷²³ See my comments in note 702 on page 179.

⁷²⁴ Here in Jer 28.11 Hananiah's name appears without הַנְּבִיא (cf. 28.15).

⁷²⁵ In contrast to Jer 28.4b, Nebuchadnezzar's name is included in 28.11.

⁷²⁶ I might suggest Jer 28.8–9 as the best candidate to alleviate Stökl's regret that 'there are no ancient Near Eastern texts which muse on the way in which prophecy works'. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 13.

vine speech. Almost all commentators are struck by Jeremiah's initial response in 28.6. Quite frequently, they will say that these statements are sarcastic, ironic or contrary-to-fact.⁷²⁷ He essentially affirms Hananiah's message, first by saying 'amen' (אמן). Together with the two phrases with jussive verbs, the אמן suggests that Jeremiah's response has a formal character.⁷²⁸ He affirms that YHWH would do as Hananiah has said (כן יעשה יהוה) and that YHWH would establish the words he prophesied. But then Jeremiah pivots, requesting that Hananiah would listen (שמע נא) to a word from Jeremiah. Again, the audience is referred to in 28.7, except here Jeremiah uses a different phrase, directing his speech to both Hananiah and the people gathered in the temple (אנכי דבר באזניך ובאזני כל העם). The other instances of this phrase have an 'official' character in Jeremiah, appearing both in the prophet's trial proceedings (26.11, 15) and in the reading of his scroll in the temple and before the king (36.6, 10, 13–15, 20–21; cf. 29.29).

4.3.1. Salvation and doom

The content of Jeremiah's response is found in Jer 28.8–9. Here he summarises the elements of prophetic speech generally by describing their activity. Two closely related statements are made in 28.8–9, the first concerning the plural הנביאים and the second concerning the singular הנביא. These verses have been, and continue to be, an integral text for the so-called 'true versus false prophecy' debate. Many of the most salient aspects of the debate rest on particular readings of 28.8–9; it is no exaggeration to say these verses are at the heart of the discussion. In the following discussion I will illustrate the importance of the text—and offer a different reading.

The statement in Jer 28.8 begins by referring to prophets of the past. Jeremiah acknowledges the prophets who lived before himself and Hananiah 'from earliest times' (מן העולם).⁷²⁹ This description essentially claims that there has been a long history of proph-

⁷²⁷ 'Initially Jeremiah is ironic.' Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 102. Micaiah ben Imlah's initial response to Ahab is often referred to as a parallel (1 Kgs 22.15); see, e.g., Holladay, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 127. To be fair, there are general similarities between the narratives in Jer 28.1–17 and 1 Kgs 22.1–38; however the latter has a very different setting with different socio-historical conventions at work in it. See Kelly, *Prophets, Kings and Honour*.

⁷²⁸ The lexeme אמן is a 'solemn formula' used to express 'the validity of a curse or declaration' (Num 5.22(x2); Deut 27.15–26; Jer 11.5; Neh 5.13; cf. Isa 65.16) or an 'acceptable order' (1 Kgs 1.36). HALOT I, 64.

⁷²⁹ This translation, 'taking the sense of *olam* to be adequately represented for most cases by "the remotest time"', is suggested by Barr, *Biblical Words for Time*, 73. Barr credits this view to Jenni, *Das Wort 'olam*, ZAW 64 (1952), 197–248. Cf. DCH VI, 300–7.

ets which leads up to the current moment, and that both Jeremiah and Hananiah are a part of a long and established tradition. The phrasing suggests no qualitative difference between the two of them.

The latter half of Jer 28.8 uses the verb **נבא** *niphal* to describe the activity of these prophets who preceded Jeremiah and Hananiah. The verb combines with three different prepositions in this clause. The first two nominal phrases, ‘many lands’ (ארצות רבות) and ‘great kingdoms’ (ממלכות גדולות), are related to the verb **נבא** *niphal* with **אל** and **על** respectively. These prepositions share a significant amount of semantic overlap when used with the verb **נבא** *niphal* and appear to have the same basic sense.⁷³⁰ Whether rendered ‘to’ or ‘against’ many lands and great kingdoms, the sense that is expressed is that the prophets have prophesied in relation to a variety of people and powers, including, but not limited to, Israel and Judah.⁷³¹ This prophesying occurred, as it was normal and expected in the ancient Near East, during times of crisis.

Following the reference to many lands and great kingdoms, three items are listed as a part of the ancient prophetic tradition: war (למלחמה), disaster (ולרעה) and pestilence (ולדבר). All three lexemes are semantically related, being generally concerned with disaster, threat and crisis, and all three bear the prefixed preposition **ל**. The dominant interpretation of these terms understands them as summaries of the traditional *content* of

⁷³⁰ Note the range and flexibility of senses listed in IBHS §11.2.2a (אל) and §11.2.13a–g (על). A good illustration of the semantic overlap between **אל** and **על** with **נבא** *niphal* appears in Jeremiah’s trial narrative in chapter 26. There the priests and prophets seek the death penalty for Jeremiah **כי נבא אל העיר הזאת** in Jer 26.11 (so also 26.12), and in the same narrative the elders mention the case of Uriah ben Shemaiah, **וינבא על** **העיר הזאת ככל דברי ירמיהו**, in 26.20. Both instances of the verb **נבא** *niphal* take the same object and both prepositions describe the same activity, as the phrase **ככל דברי ירמיהו** suggests. NB, the forms are perfect in 26.11–12 and imperfect in 26.20, but I have not observed a difference in usage (i.e. perfective/imperfective) with prepositions in verbal forms of **נבא**.

⁷³¹ Again, note IBHS §11.2.2a; §11.2.10d. Translators typically favour translating the phrase with prepositions such as ‘against’, which takes a more direct cue from the negative sense of the words for war, disaster and pestilence; see e.g. ‘against’; ‘gegen’ in ; ‘contre’ in Condamin, *Jérémie*, 206. Cf. ‘über’ in Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 361; Fischer, *Jeremia* 26–52, 65. Compare this with Lundbom’s translation: ‘they prophesied to many lands and against great kingdoms of war and evil and pestilence’. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 21–36, 325.

these prophets' oracles.⁷³² To paraphrase this reading, the prophets have always declared bad news for the nations.

The trouble with this reading is that it does not seem to follow the semantics of the verbal phrase **נבא ל־**. In syntagmatic and syntactic terms, the verb **נבא** does not seem to use **ל** to mark a direct object. For example, the phrase **נבא את־הדברים האלה** takes **הדברים האלה** as a direct object in Jer 20.1, while **נבא ל־** uses indirect objects in a dative sense, usually 'to' in reference to a person and 'concerning' in reference to a concept or idea.⁷³³ So it does not follow that **למלחמה ולרעה ולדבר** marks the things which are said by a prophet; rather, these terms relate to the action described by **נבא** *niphal* in the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. Thus, in this improved reading, the basic thrust of Jeremiah's claim is there is a long and established tradition of prophesying about, or in times of, war, disaster and famine. And according to current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East, this was generally true of prophetic behaviour and practice in the Levant and Mesopotamia. Prophets were active in times of crisis.

Much hinges on the interpretation of the following statement in Jer 28.9. Continuing his description of prophets and their activity, Jeremiah next discusses the prophet who prophesies about well-being (**הנביא אשר ינבא לשלום**). Where the plural **הנביאים** appears in 28.8, here there is a reference to the singular **הנביא**. Just as with the negative terms for war, disaster and famine, here the word for well-being (**שלום**) is prefixed with **ל** and related to **נבא** *niphal* as a dative; the reference is to the prophet who prophesies 'about' or 'concerning' well-being. In the following clause in 28.9b, Jeremiah describes the recognition (**ידע** *niphal*) of a prophet as being sent by YHWH. When the word of the prophet comes (**בבא דבר הנביא**), that prophet, whom YHWH truly sent (**אשר שלחו יהוה**), will be recognised as such. The notion of 'truth' is associated not with the word of

⁷³² I think that de Jong too heavily emphasises a 'predictive' element in the prophetic activity described in Jer 28.9 when he states: 'The preposition **ל** is used to refer to the content of their prophecies without actually citing them. Here **מִלְחָמָה** functions as the shortest possible description of bad fortune, disaster, destruction, loss of power, military defeat, etc. Prophesying "war" against a mighty country [or] kingdom is not a neutral forecast of future events, but reveals a divine decision that will be carried out by divine force. To prophesy "war" against a mighty kingdom is to declare that God has decided to ruin that kingdom.' Jong, Fallacy of "True and False", 9-10.

⁷³³ Cf. 'Because of the extreme variety of its meanings, **ל** often has a rather vague value.' Joüon-Muraoka §133d. See also IBHS §11.2.10a-i. See my comments on the constructions **נבא ל־** and **נבא את־** in chapter 2, section 2.2.3, page 70.

a prophet but with his authorisation (שלח *qal*). Thus what is at stake is not necessarily the truth of the prophetic word, but rather the reliability of the prophet (cf. 26.15).

It is very commonly argued that Jer 28.8–9 presents a contrast between two distinct types or traditions of prophecy, namely, salvation and doom.⁷³⁴ To take but two prominent examples, Fischer describes the encounter between Hananiah and Jeremiah in terms of a programmatic encounter between two different prophetic types represented by Hananiah and Jeremiah.⁷³⁵ Yet current scholarship is increasingly questioning these categories and their application to prophetic books or prophetic traditions.⁷³⁶ Similarly, Moberly thinks 28.8 gives the weight of precedent to prophecy of doom, so a message of peace ‘invites suspicion’.⁷³⁷ However, this type of concern does not apply only to salvific oracles; when Jeremiah delivers an oracle of doom for Jerusalem and Judah, in 26.15 he assures his harshly sceptical audience not to kill him because he is truly sent by YHWH (כי באמת (שלחני יהוה).

⁷³⁴ See, e.g., Duhm, *Jeremia*, 225; Giesebrecht, *Jeremia*, 152; Condamin, *Jérémie*, 206; Volz, *Jeremia*, 265; Wambacq, *Jeremias*, *BOT*, (1957), 185; Aeschmann, *Jérémie*, 162; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 179–81; Selms, *Jeremia*, I, 38–40; Hossfeld and Meyer, *Prophet gegen Prophet*, 96–99; Selms, *Jeremia*, II, 46–47; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 544–45; Hermisson, *Kriterien*, *ZThK* 92 (1995), 134–37; McKane, *Jeremiah xxvi–lii*, 718–19; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 334–35; Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 73–74; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 316–17; Hibbard, *True and False Prophecy*, 348.

⁷³⁵ ‘Hananja’s Name (»JHWH ist gnädig«, s. oben V 1) ist nicht nur Bezeichnung für eine Einzelperson, sondern für einen *Prophetentyp und dessen Programm*. Damit erhebt sich die Auseinandersetzung in Jer 28 über die Ebene eines einmaligen Konfliktes hin zu einer grundsätzlichen Differenz. Hananja steht für jene Art von Prophetie, die den Erwartungen der Leute entgegenkommt und sie gewaltsamem Auftreten (vgl. V 10) eindrucksvoll darstellt.... Ihr gegenüber steht in Jeremia eine Haltung, die sich in einer alten Tradition von Unheilspredigten (V 8) weiß. Erst im Durchgang durch großes Leid kann wieder auf ein besseres Leben gehofft werden; diese *Erneuerung bleibt Werk Gottes*, der den menschlichen Wunsch nach Aufrichten (V 6, in Nähe zum Namen Jeremias, »JHWH möge erhöhen!«, s. die Auslegung zu 1,1) erfüllt. Beide Propheten setzen also auf Gottes Gnade, doch unter verschiedenen Voraussetzungen [emphasis original].’ Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 79–80.

⁷³⁶ An excellent illustration of the problem in relation to Isaiah is Williamson, *Prophet of Weal or Woe?* The point was already stressed by Roberts nearly twenty years ago: ‘Indeed, much of the older discussion of prophetic conflict which often assumed clear and obvious distinctions, sometimes terminologically marked, between true and false prophecy corresponding to such contrasts as cultic versus non-cultic, professional versus non-professional, group versus individual, salvation versus judgment, was never convincing, and deserves to be consigned to oblivion.’ Roberts, *Blindfolding the Prophets*, 138.

⁷³⁷ ‘How, then, should Jeremiah’s response to Hananiah be understood? His words are both ironic and ad hominem, and might be paraphrased: ‘Fine. May YHWH indeed bring peace/restoration (*shālôm*), which I as well as you hope for (27:22). But the precedent of true prophecy speaks judgments which are so searching that speedy restoration is hardly possible. When a message goes against precedent, it invites suspicion such that one should only believe it when one sees it.’ Although Jeremiah is *prima facie* offering a criterion of discernment, its prime contextual thrust is a rhetorical gesture in a situation where nobody is heeding him anyway — not a criterion but a caveat.’ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 107, cf. 70–73.

One aspect of the text which also problematises these views is the inexact parallel between Jer 28.8 and 28.9. As already noted, Jeremiah discusses the tradition of prophets, plural (הנביאים), before then discussing the particular case of the prophet, singular (הנביא). According to the doom-versus-salvation view, this implies the weight of the tradition is behind the doom prophets, while the lonely salvation prophet must justify himself before being accepted. However, an additional difference is the lack of an audience for the singular prophet. The prophetic activity described in 28.8 occurs in relation to many lands and great kingdoms, yet 28.9 does not indicate for whom or for what the prophet prophesies well-being.

To prophesy לשלום basically means to provide divine assurance.⁷³⁸ In Jeremiah, there are multiple instances where the lexeme שלום occurs as a part of a prophetic oracle (see 6.14 = 8.11; 14.13). Consider also the phrase שלום יהיה לכם in Jer 4.10 and 23.17. In both instances the assurance that ‘it will go well for you’ is related to an impending threat; in 4.10 the phrase is tragic, as the people are deceived while in mortal danger (ונגעה חרב עד), and in 23.17 it parallels a reassuring oracle that no disaster (רעה) will come.

It is important to stress that prophetic oracles of reassurance and comfort do not necessarily imply passivity. It is widely recognised that prophetic speech, in a fundamental sense, is speech which attempts to influence human behaviour; however it is sometimes assumed that this attempt to influence is more pronounced in a word of doom, as negative oracles produce a change in behaviour, often described with שוב *qal*. Moberly asserts that a ‘fundamental axiom about prophecy’ is that whatever ‘a prophet says on behalf of God seeks a particular kind of response – turning from sin, or avoiding a turn to sin, as the case may be.’⁷³⁹ Consequently, ‘when the prophet announces impending disaster, what he seeks is a response of turning to God.’⁷⁴⁰ This is a very limited account of the potential changes in behaviour that oracles of salvation can encourage. A case in point is the use of the formula אל תירא in prophetic oracles, a phrase which is deeply connected to war contexts (e.g. 2 Chr 20.15–17).⁷⁴¹ While there is a variety of uses of the phrase in the Hebrew

⁷³⁸ Though it is often understood primarily with the sense ‘peace’, שלום has a wide semantic range. See DCH VII, 365–70.

⁷³⁹ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 52.

⁷⁴⁰ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 54. Cf. his statement that ‘true prophecy speaks of judgments which are so searching that speedy restoration is hardly possible’ (p. 107).

⁷⁴¹ Variations of this phrase are widely attested in the ancient Near East. See Dion, ‘Fear Not’ Formula, *CBQ* 32 (1970), 565–70; Weippert, »Heiliger Krieg«, *ZAW* 84 (1972), 460–93; Toorn, *L’oracle de victoire*, 73–79;

Bible, it certainly does more than suggest passivity. This is evident in 1.4–10, where YHWH instructs Jeremiah to go and speak where he is instructed to do so; the reassurance **אל תירא** is an encouragement for Jeremiah to perform his newly assigned tasks he was initially reticent to accept (cf. 1.6). Thus, in my view, the statements in 28.9 do differ from 28.8, but they refer to the same prophetic function.

It must also be stressed that the specific threat under discussion in all of Jer 27.1–28.17 is Babylon. Jeremiah directly addresses the question of whether or not to serve the Babylonians in 27.5–11. The basic summary of his position is to submit and live, because not doing so will only bring death and destruction (27.17). Hananiah takes the opposite position in 28.2–4. YHWH has broken Babylon's yoke, and by implication Judah should not serve. Here both prophets are engaged in the same process described in 28.8; they prophesy 'against' lands and kingdoms—Hananiah against Babylon, Jeremiah against Syria-Palestine—and both of their oracles concern the crisis brought upon Jerusalem by Babylonian siege and attack. Thus, the 'well-being' assured by the prophet in 28.8 is analogous to Hananiah's encouragement to resist Babylon. It is not an assurance of peace but one of success.⁷⁴²

4.3.2. Discernment and Deuteronomy 18.20–22

Another common reading of Jer 28.8–9 draws a contrast between different 'types' of prophecy. Taking a cue from the phrase **אשר שלחו יהוה באמת**, if these verses contrast two types of prophets, one acceptable and another unacceptable, then there must have been some way to tell the difference between them. This has prompted a number of studies on 'discernment criteria' for dividing the true prophet from the false.

This search for discernment criteria has led many to appeal to Deut 18.20–22 as a related text, usually claiming that Jer 28 shows dependence on the Deuteronomic text.⁷⁴³ In order to assess the comparison, it is necessary to look at the key portions of the *Prophetengesetz* in Deut 18.9–22 and consider its function in the context of Deuteronomy.⁷⁴⁴ The

Nissinen, *Fear Not*, 149–51.

⁷⁴² Contrast with Jong, *Fallacy of "True and False"*, 11.

⁷⁴³ E.g. Hibbard, *True and False Prophecy*, 346–47; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 130.

⁷⁴⁴ See Zobel, *Prophetie und Deuteronomium*, BZAW 199, Berlin, 1992, 192–215; Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 84–85; Nihan, « Un prophète comme Moïse », in: *La construction de la figure de Moïse*, ed. Römer, Supplément à Transeuphratène 13, Paris, 2007, 43–76; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*; Achenbach, "Prophet like Moses". On the lexeme **נביא** in the Pentateuch, see Stökl, *Prophecy in the*

regulations for divinatory practices in 18.9–22 contain a series of instructions given by YHWH which concern the means by which knowledge of the divine will may be acquired. There are strict prohibitions against practices which are deemed ‘Canaanite’ in 18.9–14. Upon entering the land of promise, the Israelites are strictly prohibited from practicing any of the abominations (תועבת) of the local population. Child sacrifice (מעביר בנו ובתו), divination (קסם קסמים), augury (מעוון), soothsaying (מנחש), witchcraft (מכשף), spell-casting (חבר הבר), consulting ghosts and spirits (שאל אוב וידעני) and necromancy (דרש אל המתים) are all considered abominations.⁷⁴⁵ YHWH has not assigned these methods to Israel (ואתה לא כן נתן לך יהוה אלהיך). These practices are to be completely avoided because they risk compromising the people’s complete and singular devotion to YHWH.⁷⁴⁶

In place of these ‘non-Israelite’ divinatory practices, prophecy is given a privileged status in the Deuteronomic perspective as the sole means by which the people gain access to the divine will. In Deut 18.15 (cf. 18.18), YHWH promises the people a prophet (נביא) from among their brothers who will be ‘like me’, that is, like Moses.⁷⁴⁷ YHWH will raise up (hiphil קום) this prophet to whom the people will listen (qal שמע) instead of the Canaanite diviners. He will put his word in the prophet’s mouth and will instruct him on what to say (18.18; cf. Jer 1.7, 9; 5.14). Anyone who does not listen will be punished (Deut 18.19).

Two statements then appear in Deut 18.20–22 which are highly influential in most interpretations of Jer 28.8–9. First, in Deut 18.20 YHWH declares to the people that any prophet who speaks in his name presumptuously (hiphil זיד), without being instructed (piel צוה) to do so or in the name of other gods, shall die. The reference to death in 18.20 is rather general; no specific prescription details the means by which the prophet will perish.⁷⁴⁸ Given the context of 18.9–14, there is a clear concern about apostasy in this warning; any hint of following אלהים אחרים is unacceptable in the eyes of the Deuteronomic writers. In the conclusion of the Hananiah narrative in Jer 28.17, a short notice states that

Ancient Near East, 176–78.

⁷⁴⁵ Schmitt discusses each of these terms in his overview of divinatory terminology and in a discussion of Deut 18.9–22. See Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 46–73, 121–24.

⁷⁴⁶ The theme of Israelite distinctiveness is a key aspect of the text. See Crouch, *Making of Israel*, VT.S 162, Leiden, 2014, 141–46; Crouch, *What Makes a Thing Abominable?*, VT 65 (2015), 516–41.

⁷⁴⁷ The phrase נביא מקרבך מאחריך כמי in Deut 18.15 emphasises that the prophet will be Israelite, as opposed to non-Israelite. Many have sought to identify a specific ‘prophet like Moses’ or a *successio mosaica*, as noted previously in chapter 3, section 2.4, page 96.

⁷⁴⁸ Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*, 156.

Hananiah died not long after his encounter with Jeremiah. Since his death functions to validate Jeremiah and his standing as a prophet (cf. 28.15–16), it is not necessarily viewed as a punishment for apostasy.

Second, in Deut 18.21–22, YHWH addresses the natural follow-up question: How can one know if a prophetic word does not come from YHWH? The question is clearly related to the primary concern of the text to promote a singular allegiance to YHWH. If a prophet speaks in YHWH's name and the word does not happen or come (ולא יהיה הדבר ולא יבוא), then it was not a YHWH word (18.22). In this case, the prophet has spoken his word presumptuously (בזדון), and the people are not to fear (גור *qal*) him. Nothing more is said about the content of the prophet's message, nor the prophet himself.⁷⁴⁹

It is clear that the text in Deut 18.20–22 is guided by very different concerns than those in Jer 28.8–9. Issues related to apostasy and following other gods than YHWH dominate in Deut 18.20–22. One listens to a prophet only if he has YHWH's word. In Jer 28.8–9, Jeremiah discusses the issue of prophets assuring success or well-being in situations of crisis. Here the authority of a prophet is in question when that prophet speaks positively about the people's prospects during a time of crisis.

It is also difficult to say that either text establishes any criteria as such for telling the difference between 'true' and 'false' prophecy. As it has been observed, Deut 18.20–22 and Jer 28.8–9 do not offer much practical guidance on how one decides whether or not to heed a prophet's word. The view they take of a prophet's words is retrospective; after their words have (or have not) come, the prophets' audience will then know whether or not they are truly sent or have YHWH's word. For good reason, scholars have mostly abandoned the search for discernment criteria.

4.4. Summary

One of the most interesting texts concerned with prophecy is Jer 28.1–11, as it boasts one of the only general statements about prophecy in the book. In 28.8–9, Jeremiah responds

⁷⁴⁹ It is incorrect to assert that, in Deut 18.22, 'prophecies of doom are at issue, since people are told that, when prophecies go unfulfilled, "You need not be afraid of him"' [emphasis original]. Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 21–36, 335. So also Crenshaw, *Prophetic Conflict*, 53; Childs, *Old Testament Theology in a Canonical Context*, 133–34. There is no interest in Deut 18.9–22 to distinguish between 'doom' and 'salvation' in divinatory practice, and the sense of גור III *qal* is can be used to describe a kind of fearful reverence or respect; see Ps 22.24; 33.8; cf. Deut 1.7; 1 Sam 18.15. See DCH II, 336–37; HALOT I, 185.

to Hananiah's oracle with a description of the activity common to the prophetic tradition. Prophecy concerning 'many lands' (ארצות רבות) and 'great kingdoms' (ממלכות גדולות) dealt with some of the major crises ancient societies faced. All societies facing the threats of war (מלחמה), disaster (רעה) and pestilence (דבר), of course, experience anxiety, uncertainty and concern, and prophets provided guidance on these matters.⁷⁵⁰ All three lexemes are semantically related, being generally concerned with crisis. The nature of the statement in 28.8–9 is therefore related to the *situations* which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity, not to the *content* of prophetic speech. This contrasts with the traditional reading of this passage, that 28.8–9 demarcates between prophets of doom and prophets of salvation.⁷⁵¹ Rather, the basic thrust of Jeremiah's claim is there is a long and established tradition of prophesying about, or in times of, war, disaster and famine.

My reading of Jer 28.8–9 is based in part on the semantics of the verb נבא. The combinations of verb נבא *niphal* with אל and על share a significant amount of semantic overlap. When used with the verb נבא *niphal* and appear to have the same basic sense.⁷⁵² The sense that is expressed in 28.8 is that the prophets have prophesied in relation to a variety of people and powers, including, but not limited to, Israel and Judah. Also, the verbal construction לִי נבא is primarily dative, that is, 'to' in reference to a person and 'concerning' in reference to a concept or idea (28.8; cf. נבא את־ in 20.1). Thus, the list of למלחמה ולרעה ולדבר in 28.8 does not indicate the things spoken by a prophet, but the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. The typical reading, that prophets traditionally announce war and disaster, rests on the assumption that Cryer called 'the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with "predicting the future"'.⁷⁵³ Prophets were especially active in times of crisis, and Jeremiah seems aware of this tradition. The alternative reading I have suggested corresponds much more closely to current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East as a form of divination.

Other key aspects of the 'true' versus 'false' prophecy debate rest on Jer 28.8–9. It is often assumed that there is a relationship between this text and the criterion for discern-

⁷⁵⁰ See Tiemeyer, Prophecy as a Way of Cancelling Prophecy; Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341; Jong, Fallacy of "True and False", 4.

⁷⁵¹ See note 734 on page 187.

⁷⁵² See IBHS §11.2.2a (אל) and §11.2.13a–g (על). See also Duhm, *Jeremiah*, 225.

⁷⁵³ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 122, see also n. 1.

ment in Deut 18.20–22.⁷⁵⁴ However, some scholars now doubt that Jeremiah depends on this text, and their respective contexts highlight the differences between them.⁷⁵⁵ The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional view of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’. However, more recent scholarship recognises that the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy.⁷⁵⁶ Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Rather, it is the prophetic authorisation, ‘being sent’ (שלח *qal*), that is at stake (cf. Deut 18.22). The key issue is not necessarily the truth of the prophetic word, but rather the reliability of the prophet (cf. Jer 26.15). Lastly, interpreters often see an implied contrast between doom and salvation in 28.8–9; since prophecies of doom encourage repentance, they are more ‘true’ than prophecies of salvation.⁷⁵⁷ However, oracles of reassurance and comfort do not necessarily imply passivity. In a fundamental sense, all prophetic speech attempts to influence human behaviour, and the statements in 28.8–9 refer to the same prophetic function.

The setting of Jer 28.1–11, in the context of the Jerusalem temple and in the presence of the priests and all the people, imparts an added significance to the encounter between Hananiah and Jeremiah. As Cryer has observed, the formal similarities of 28.1–11 are quite similar to those of the so-called ‘omen sacrifice’ texts.⁷⁵⁸ While recent scholarship does seem to show that extispicy was known in ancient Israel,⁷⁵⁹ it is far too speculative to claim it is present in 28.1–11. However, these formal features of the text observed by Cryer, in my view, should not go unnoticed. Formal language, the importance of the location, the seriousness of the content, the use of ‘official’ titles, the presence of priests, mention of cultic instruments, and the temple context are hints of a ritual or cultic practice that at least reinforce the connections between prophets, priests and the cult.

⁷⁵⁴ Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 84–85; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 130; Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 255–56.

⁷⁵⁵ Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 152–53; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 11–13.

⁷⁵⁶ Nissinen, Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie, in: *Mesopotamia — Ugaritica — Biblica*, ed. Dietrich and Loretz, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1993, 251; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”.

⁷⁵⁷ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 52–54, 107. On repentance as a sign of true prophecy, see Jeremias, »Wahre« und »falsche« Prophetie, 349.

⁷⁵⁸ Judg 18.2–24; 20.18–28; 1 Sam 9.22–24; 14.2–19, 35–37; 21.2–7; 23.1–12; 30.7–8; 2 Sam 2.1; 21.1; 24.11–15. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 295–305. See also Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 47–48.

⁷⁵⁹ Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 47–48.

5. Jeremiah 28.12–17

Following the first episode in Jer 28.1–11, the second half of the text in 28.12–17 narrates another interaction between Hananiah and Jeremiah. The text clearly represents these two textual units as related halves. A word of YHWH comes to Jeremiah after Hananiah had broken the yoke from Jeremiah's neck. This short account of what happened in 28.10–11 treats it as a separate event, and assumes a new setting for what follows in 28.12–17. Unlike 28.1–11, there are no indications of location or audience in 28.12–17. Nebuchadnezzar's yoke is the dominant theme of 28.12–17; the return of people and goods from Babylon is not mentioned again. Two oracles are delivered by Jeremiah; the first pertains to the yoke (28.13–14) and the second pertains to Hananiah (28.15–16). A historical notice in 28.17 concludes the narrative.

5.1. Text and translation

- (12) ויהי דבר יהוה אל ירמיה אחרי שבור חנניה הנביא את המוטה מעל צואר ירמיה הנביא לאמר
(13) הלוך ואמרת אל חנניה לאמר כה אמר יהוה מוטת עץ שברת ועשית תחתיהן מטות ברזל
(14) כי כה אמר יהוה צבאות אלהי ישראל על ברזל נתתי על צואר כל הגוים האלה לעבד את נבכדנאצר מלך בבל ועבדהו וגם את חית השדה נתתי לו⁷⁶⁰
(15) ויאמר ירמיה הנביא אל חנניה הנביא שמע נא חנניה לא שלחך יהוה ואתה הבטחת את העם הזה על שקר
(16) לכן כה אמר יהוה הנני משלחך מעל פני האדמה השנה אתה מת כי סרה דברת אל יהוה⁷⁶¹
(17) וימת חנניה הנביא בשנה ההיא בחדש השביעי

- (12) And a word of YHWH came to Jeremiah after the prophet Hananiah broke the yoke from the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,
(13) Go and say to Hananiah, saying, Thus said YHWH, bars of wood you broke, and made instead bars of iron.

⁷⁶⁰ BHS deletes the phrase *וְגַם אֶת חֵית הַשָּׂדֶה נָתַתִּי לוֹ* from L in Jer 28.14, and suggests it is from 27.6 (cf. *לְעַבְדּוֹ*). In support of this emendation, the *apparatus criticus* notes the phrase is absent from *Ṣ**. Many others adopt this view; see, e.g., Duhm, *Jeremia*, 226; Rudolph, *Jeremia*, 180; McKane, *Jeremiah i-xxv*, 714. I prefer to read L as it stands.

⁷⁶¹ BHS deletes the phrase *כִּי סָרָה דְּבַרְתָּ אֶל יְהוָה*, noting its omission from *Ṣ**, and suggests it is from Deut 13.6 (cf. 18.20). The phrase *כִּי דְּבַר סָרָה עַל יְהוָה* in Deut 13.6 is similar, and so is *כִּי סָרָה דְּבַר עַל יְהוָה* in Jer 29.32 (also missing in *Ṣ**). See Janzen, *Studies in the Text of Jeremiah*, 48. Some interpreters think passages in Jeremiah influenced Deuteronomy's laws regarding prophecy. See Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 147–55; Nicholson, *Provenance of Deuteronomy*, ZAW 124 (2012), 528–40. Here I prefer to read L as it stands.

- (14) For thus said YHWH of Hosts, God of Israel, an iron yoke I have placed on the neck of all these nations to serve Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and they will serve him; even the beasts of the field I have given to him.
- (15) And the prophet Jeremiah said to the prophet Hananiah, Listen, Hananiah, YHWH did not send you and you have made this people trust a lie.
- (16) Therefore, thus said YHWH, Now I am sending you, off the face of the ground. This year you will die because you spoke rebellion against YHWH.
- (17) And Hananiah the prophet died that year in the seventh month.

5.2. Jeremiah and Hananiah, part II

Following the episode in Jer 28.1–11, a word from YHWH comes to Jeremiah instructing him to go and speak to Hananiah. In contrast to all of the previous times he spoke in 28.1–11, Jeremiah introduces his word with the phrase *כה אמר יהוה* (28.13, 14, 16). Jeremiah then delivers an oracle in 28.13–14 from YHWH that is a negative reading of Hananiah's sign-act: he broke bars of wood (*מוטת עץ*) but has made instead bars of iron (*מטות ברזל*). Iron can have repulsive or fearful overtones, and is often semantically related to foreign oppression (cf. Deut 28.48).⁷⁶² This reinterpretation of Hananiah's action turns his message of salvation to Judah and the nations into something brutal and harsh.

YHWH outlines more negative consequences of Hananiah's act in Jer 28.14. YHWH says he has placed an iron yoke neck of all these nations (*כל הגוים האלה*). The only available candidates in the context of 27.1–28.17 are Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon from 27.3. Jer 28.14 also reintroduces the theme of service (*עבד*) given to Nebuchadnezzar by both nations and beasts, which is part of the message delivered to these nations in 27.6. So Jeremiah also functions as a *נביא לגוים*.

Another word follows in Jer 28.15–16 which pertains directly to Hananiah. Jeremiah again asks Hananiah to listen (*שמע נא*) to what he has to say (cf. 28.7). Jeremiah claims that YHWH did not send him (*לא שלחך יהוה*),⁷⁶³ and accuses him of causing the people to trust (*hiphil* בטה) in a lie (cf. 29.31). As a result, YHWH says he is sending (*piel* שלח) him from of the face of the earth (*מעל פני האדמה*); this is a euphemism for death, made clear by the following claim that Hananiah will die that same year. Hananiah has spoken 'rebellion' (*סרה*) against YHWH (cf. 29.32).

⁷⁶² Sawyer, Meaning of barzel, in: *Midian, Moab and Edom*, ed. Clines, JSOTS 24, Sheffield, 1983, 132–33.

⁷⁶³ The same phrase *אל שלחך יהוה* appears in Jer 43.2, where it is an accusation made against Jeremiah.

The narrative concludes with a simple chronological notice in Jer 28.17. Hananiah the prophet died that same year, in the fifth month. Based on the chronology of 28.1, the entire narrative of 28.1–17 encompasses a two month time period.

5.3. Summary

A second encounter between Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jer 28.12–17 following the episode in 28.1–11. Jeremiah then delivers an oracle in 28.13–14 from YHWH that is a negative reading of Hananiah's sign-act: he broke bars of wood (מוטת עץ) but has made instead bars of iron (מטות ברזל). This reinterpretation of Hananiah's action turns his message of salvation to Judah and the nations into something brutal and harsh. Because of the reference to rebellion (סרה) against YHWH and Hananiah's death notice (28.15–17), this text is often read in light of Deut 13.6 or 18.20–22.⁷⁶⁴ Thus, Hananiah's death exposes him as a 'false' prophet.⁷⁶⁵ However, fulfilment and non-fulfilment are crude measures of prophetic authenticity and authority.⁷⁶⁶ The text here does not seem to imply a general test of fulfilment for prophecy; instead, the notice in 28.17 simply confirms Jeremiah's authority as a prophet.⁷⁶⁷

6. Conclusion

Out of the tension between contrasting prophetic messages, Jer 27.1–28.17 illustrates several key aspects of the nature of prophecy according to the book. The yoke of Babylon is a thematic concern of 27.1–28.17. The text reports various prophetic messages about whether or not the kings of Syria-Palestine should serve the Babylonians or revolt. Jeremiah's position, submit and live (27.16–22), relates serving Babylon and serving YHWH together.⁷⁶⁸ Rival foreign and domestic diviners, including the prophet Hananiah from Gibeon, take the opposite position, do not serve (27.10, 14; 28.2–4). Jeremiah warns against heeding

⁷⁶⁴ Cf., e.g., Hermisson, *Kriterien*, 135; Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 78–79; Hibbard, *True and False Prophecy*; Römer, *Comment distinguer ?*, 117–19; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 130.

⁷⁶⁵ Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 259. This is interpreted as an 'ironic' fulfilment of his prediction and Jeremiah's claim that he was not 'sent'. Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 78–79; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 318.

⁷⁶⁶ Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 39; Wilson, *Prophecy: Biblical Prophecy*, EncRel XI (2005), 7434. Cf. Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 23–24.

⁷⁶⁷ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 546–47, 550.

⁷⁶⁸ See Friebe, *Jeremiah's and Ezekiel's Sign-Acts*, 144.

these messages (27.9, 14, 16), and calls them lies (27.10, 14; 28.15). The stage is set, so to speak, for a discussion of what prophets do and how they function.

One of the primary questions scholars have sought to answer in relation to this text is how one should distinguish between these prophetic messages. A simple logic guides the traditional analysis. If two prophetic messages oppose one another (i.e. serve/do not serve), both cannot be right. How is this decided? One solution is to appeal to the means of revelation. Since the divinatory specialists listed in Jer 27.9 includes specialists who are rejected by Deuteronomy (Deut 13.2–6; 18.9–22 cf. Jer 14.14; 29.7), or presumably speak on behalf of false gods, their message cannot be accepted. However, YHWH prophets take the same position in 27.10 and 27.14 (cf. 28.2–4), and the text does not suggest that the message is false because it derives from illicit means of inspiration.⁷⁶⁹ It assumes all of these individuals are engaged in the same intellectual activity of prophesying (כִּי שָׁקֵר הֵם וְנִבְאִים לָכֵם). It does seem clear that the motif of ‘being sent’ is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נָבִיא. This is the one difference between the two warnings not to listen (cf. Jer 27.10, 15). However, in terms of their function, it is clear that the prophets and diviners are more alike than not.

Perhaps, the argument goes, Deuteronomy helps in another way. A ‘wait and see’ test seems to judge Hananiah as ‘false’ when his death is recorded in Jer 28.17. Because he spoke rebellion (סָרָה) against YHWH (cf. Deut 13.6; 18.20–22), and because Jeremiah’s prediction came true (Jer 28.15–17), Hananiah’s death has the twofold function of exposing him as a ‘false’ prophet,⁷⁷⁰ and confirming Jeremiah as a ‘true’ prophet.⁷⁷¹ Fulfilment and non-fulfilment, it seems, are tests for prophetic veracity. However, scholars have long recognised that fulfilment and non-fulfilment are crude measures of prophetic authenticity and authority.⁷⁷² One should not draw a general test for prophecy from this context.

It is also not clear that differentiation between cultic and non-cultic prophets marks true prophecy from the false. For example, some read the encouragement given to

⁷⁶⁹ Additionally, an obvious point some commentators seem to miss is that, from a rhetorical perspective, the audience in 27.1–11 is made up of *non-Judaean* kings. Hypothetically speaking, whether or not deuteronomic tradition accepted their diviners would be entirely irrelevant to them. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21–36*, 317–18; Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 55; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 308. Cf. Barstad, *No Prophets?*, 47–48.

⁷⁷⁰ Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 259. This is interpreted as an ‘ironic’ fulfilment of his prediction and Jeremiah’s claim that he was not ‘sent’. Fischer, *Jeremia 26–52*, 78–79; Allen, *Jeremiah*, 318.

⁷⁷¹ Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 546–47, 550.

⁷⁷² Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 39; Wilson, *Prophecy: Biblical Prophecy*, EncRel XI, 7434. Cf. Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 23–24.

Judaean prophets in Jer 27.18 to intercede (עָלָה *qal*) with YHWH as sarcastic or contrary to fact.⁷⁷³ The debate over whether or not Israelite prophets had a special intercessory role rooted in the cult, as Thelle has shown, obscures the larger patterns of prayer and intercession in the Hebrew Bible.⁷⁷⁴ While not an ‘office’ or an act restricted to prophets, intercession should be considered a normal prophetic behaviour.⁷⁷⁵ Similarly, the setting of 28.1–11, with both Jeremiah and Hananiah in temple and in the presence of the priests and all the people, does not appear to distinguish cultic and non-cultic forms of prophecy. As Cryer has observed, the formal elements of 28.1–11 resemble rituals for cultic forms of divinatory inquiry.⁷⁷⁶ The ritual and cultic features of the text reinforce the connections between prophets, priests and the cult.

The crux of the passage, and perhaps *the* crux for the ‘true’ versus ‘false’ prophecy debate, comes in Jer 28.8–9. The dominant interpretation of this text has contrasted between two distinct types of prophecy: salvation and doom.⁷⁷⁷ In the classic scholarly construct of prophecy, it was thought that ‘Unheilsprophetie war die Regel’.⁷⁷⁸ Only prophecies of doom could have encouraged the desperately sinful Israelites to repent, the key element of prophecy; prophecies of salvation, accordingly, were treated with increased suspicion.⁷⁷⁹ However, the scholarly construct has changed rather drastically, as scholars now are much less dismissive of salvation in prophetic speech; in some cases it is regarded as the most ‘authentic’ forms of ‘early’ prophetic speech.⁷⁸⁰ In a more fundamental sense, the distinctions between ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ are simply conventional; all proph-

⁷⁷³ Fischer, *Jeremia* 26–52, 60.

⁷⁷⁴ Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*, 109–20; Boer, *De voorbede in het Oude Testament*; Hesse, *Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament*; Thelle, *Ask God*, 117–19. In some studies, the idea of a particular intercessory ‘office’ is connected to a cultic office or role. See, e.g., Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich*; Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*.

⁷⁷⁵ Thelle, *Ask God*, 117–61. See also Tiemeyer, *Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?*

⁷⁷⁶ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 295–305. See also Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 47–48.

⁷⁷⁷ See note 734 on page 187.

⁷⁷⁸ Wolff, *Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie*, 465. See also Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*; Jeremias, *Vollmacht des Propheten*; Vogels, *Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?*, 689–91.

⁷⁷⁹ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 52–54, 107.

⁷⁸⁰ See, e.g., Kratz, *Neue in der Prophetie*; Jong, *Isaiah*; Blum, *Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext*; Jong, *Biblical Prophecy—A Scribal Enterprise*, VT 61 (2011), 39–70; Williamson, *Prophet of Weal or Woe?*, 273–300, cit. 283.

etic speech attempts to influence human behaviour, and the statements in 28.8–9 refer to the same prophetic function.⁷⁸¹

The semantics of the verb נבא supports my conclusions. The combinations of verb נבא *niphal* with אל and על express the same basic sense of prophesying in relation to something; one should not construe על as negative.⁷⁸² Similarly, the verb נבא does not use the verbal construction ל- to mark a direct object (28.8; cf. נבא את- in 20.1). The use of ל- is primarily dative, that is, ‘to’ in reference to a person and ‘concerning’ in reference to a concept or idea. Thus, when Jeremiah claims that prophets from ages past have prophesied war (מלחמה), disaster (רעה) and pestilence (דבר), this does not indicate the things spoken by a prophet, but the situations which have traditionally prompted prophetic activity. Thus, the statement in 28.8–9 does not concern prophetic *predictions* of war and peace.⁷⁸³ Rather, the claim is that prophets have been especially active in times of crisis. This corresponds with current accounts of the phenomenon of prophecy in the ancient Near East.

Finally, it should be stressed that the mention of truth (אמת) in Jer 28.9 does not describe true *prophets* but true *authority*. The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional contrast of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’ according to the criterion set forth in Deut 18.20–22.⁷⁸⁴ However, the differences between these texts are greater than is often assumed,⁷⁸⁵ and recent scholarship views the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy.⁷⁸⁶ Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Instead, it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9, as אמת modifies the thematic verb שלח. What is at stake is whether or not the prophet is ‘sent’ (שלח *qal*) and therefore reliable (cf. Jer 26.15), not whether the message is true or false.

⁷⁸¹ See Barstad, *Sic dicit dominus*.

⁷⁸² See IBHS §11.2.2a (אל) and §11.2.13a–g (על).

⁷⁸³ This reading avoids what Cryer called ‘the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with “predicting the future”’. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 122, see also n. 1.

⁷⁸⁴ Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 84–85; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 130; Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 255–56.

⁷⁸⁵ Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 152–53; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 11–13.

⁷⁸⁶ Nissinen, *Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie*, 251; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

All roads must lead somewhere, and the present chapter will bring this investigation to its conclusion. The guiding interest of this work has been to explain ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah. The following represents my account of the ‘conversation’ in three parts: (1) a summary of findings in this investigation; (2) contributions to research and current debates; and (3) implications for further research.

I. Summary of findings

Certain themes and points of emphasis emerged over the course of this investigation. The consistency of these themes in both the semantic analysis and close readings is significant. In the introduction, I framed my work as an intervention to the so-called ‘false prophecy’ debate, and I have dealt with various aspects of the discussion throughout my analysis. To answer the question of ‘false prophecy’, one must have an idea in mind of what a prophet *is*. I have focused on this question throughout by drawing attention to the nature and function of prophecy in Jeremiah. In this summary of findings, I outline the main contributions of this investigation in relation to this debate, and demonstrate the need to shift the discussion’s emphasis away from the idea of ‘falsehood’ in the direction of ‘legitimacy.’

Rather than re-summarise my findings chapter by chapter, I have assembled them together under thematic headings. In doing so, it is my aim to demonstrate the integrated nature of my conclusions; in the semantic analysis of the lexeme נביא and the close readings of Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17, similar results have been found. The synthesis of my results constitutes an explanation of ‘what we talk about when we talk about prophets’ in the book of Jeremiah.

I.1. Function and nature of prophecy

A consistent description of some basic aspects of prophecy were found in this study. The Hebrew lexeme נביא, a denominative noun, is the word used to refer to a prophet. As it is

used in Jeremiah, it seems best to understand this as a reference to a function. This is seen in part by the nature of נביא as a denominative; for example, the most frequent association with verbs from נבא is with the lexeme נביא, and the most frequent subject for finite forms of נבא is the plural נביאים.⁷⁸⁷ *Niphal* and *hithpael* forms of the verb are used in reference to the same kinds of activity.⁷⁸⁸ Prophecy involves a range of behaviours and activities conceptually related to the transmission of information from the divine realm.⁷⁸⁹ This information takes various forms, such as warning, threat, reassurance, comfort, criticism, encouragement, advice and intercession.⁷⁹⁰ Additionally, prophets are described as performing the same intellectual activities as other diviners (cf. Jer 14.14; 27.9; 29.7), and are closely related to priests.

Prophetic messages are communicated to their recipients with the aim of influencing behaviour; for example, prophets give encouragement to take a particular course of action, or issue threats should a particular course of action continue. As in the case of Jeremiah's commission, the prophetic function affects a range of social strata, including its highest levels of organisation (cf. Jer 1.10, 15, 18). The same is true of other prophets, who are described as communicating with royal figures, cultic functionaries, popular audiences, and other prophets. The semantic associations of נביא with verbs of communication (אמר *qal*, דבר *piel*, יען *qal*, מנע *qal*, נאם *qal*, נגד *hiphil*, ספר *piel*, ענה *qal*) show the importance of this activity..

1.2. Dreams and visions

There is some debate in current scholarship concerning the relationship between prophecy and dreams.⁷⁹¹ In terms of the means of communication between deity and prophet, a

⁷⁸⁷ Semantic associations between both singular and plural forms of נביא are very similar.

⁷⁸⁸ Cf. Meyer, *Jeremia und die falschen Propheten*, 60-62; Parker, *Possession Trance and Prophecy*, 282; Wilson, *Prophecy and Ecstasy*, 335-36; Gonçalves, *Les « Prophètes Écrivains »*, 156-57; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 21-36*, 364-65.

⁷⁸⁹ Cf. Stökl, נביא/נביאָה, SAHD, §5, A.1.

⁷⁹⁰ The reference to intercession in Jer 27.18 is a part of wider patterns of divine consultation. While not an 'office' or an act restricted to prophets, intercession should be considered a normal prophetic behaviour. Thelle, *Ask God*, 117-61. See also Tiemeyer, *Were the Neo-Assyrian Prophets Intercessors?*

⁷⁹¹ In support of viewing them together, see Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*, 48, *passim*; Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 21-22; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 56-57; Huffmon, *Prophecy in the Mari Texts*, 205-13, esp. 208-9. In support of a distinction between them, see Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 10, 98, 222-23.

formal difference between ‘seeing’ and ‘speaking’ does not seem to imply a *functional* difference.⁷⁹² The dreams of the prophets are criticised not because they are dreams *per se*. In Jer 23.16–24, the most sustained discussion of dreams in the book, prophets who dream are criticised, but not necessarily on the basis of the means of their inspiration. Their dreams are criticised because they lead the people into apostasy, and the same warning not to listen (שמע) applies to words and dreams (23.16; cf. 27.9). The function of words and dreams appears to be the same. The verbs נבא and חלם are used in parallel and they share some semantic overlap. As they are found in Jeremiah, I would not draw a sharp distinction between prophetic messages and dreams, as they appear well within the prophetic purview.⁷⁹³

Similarly, visions are portrayed as an important part of prophecy. As a part of prophetic speech, a vision (הזון) functions to add legitimacy to the message of a prophet.⁷⁹⁴ This is evident in Jer 1.11–14 (cf. 4.23–27; 24.1–10) and in 23.16; visions are found in a cooperative relationship with speech and they function to legitimate prophetic speech. Jer 23.18, 22 cites prophetic participation in the divine council, a common feature of prophecy in the ancient Near East, as a mark of legitimate prophecy; there is good reason to read this as another reference to a vision that legitimates a prophet.⁷⁹⁵ Previously, scholars have sought to privilege the concept of the ‘word’ over other forms of prophetic inspiration.⁷⁹⁶ While it is equally dubious to make visionary experience a necessary grounds for authentic prophetic experience (i.e. ecstasy), the texts and semantic data in my analysis do not support a sharp division between types of prophetic inspiration. Claiming that one has had a vision serves to underwrite a prophetic message with greater authority. In my view, this suggests a cooperative relationship between vision and speech in prophecy.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹² This is in contrast to the view of Stökl. In his view, since visions ‘have their own terminology’ this demonstrates ‘that they were a form of communication distinct from prophecy.’ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 223.

⁷⁹³ Cf. Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 133–35.

⁷⁹⁴ Behrens, *Prophetische Visionsschilderungen*, 66–70; Hayes, *Role of Visionary Experiences*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

⁷⁹⁵ Gordon, *From Mari to Moses*, 71–74; Nissinen, *Prophets and the Divine Council*; Jong, *Isaiah*, 338. Cf. Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 224–26.

⁷⁹⁶ See, e.g., Parker, *Possession Trance and Prophecy*; Zimmerli, *Visionary Experience in Jeremiah*, 115; Shead, *Mouth Full of Fire*, 122, 186–87.

⁷⁹⁷ Mayes, *Prophecy and Society in Israel*; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 49–50.

1.3. Being sent

The prophetic claim to be sent (שלח *qal*) is a common pattern found in the ancient Near Eastern concept of prophecy.⁷⁹⁸ This concept is used to reinforce the authority and authorisation of a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Semantically, the field of command or instruction (צוה *piel*, קום *hiphil* and שלח *qal*) is significant for the lexeme נביא, and the most frequent use of the verb שלח takes נביא as its object.⁷⁹⁹ Jeremiah is often described as a ‘prophet like Moses’ based on Jer 1.4–10, but one also could say that Jeremiah’s ‘prophet like-ness’ is more fundamentally related to the ‘sent’ motif.⁸⁰⁰ In the context of Jer 23.9–40, where prophetic legitimacy is a major theme, the concepts of being sent (שלח), commanded (צוה) and spoken to (דבר) in 23.16–22 follow the general pattern; they are used in a polemical context to denigrate the authority and authorisation of prophets to speak on behalf of YHWH. When prophet messages are rejected along with those of other diviners in 27.10 and 27.15 with the same language, it is only the prophets who are accused of not ‘being sent’. The motif seems specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא.

In the key text Jer 28.9, truth (אמת) is associated with the thematic verb שלח. In contrast to a common reading of the passage, that the text contrasts true and false prophets,⁸⁰¹ what is at stake here is whether or not the prophet is ‘sent’ (שלח *qal*) and therefore reliable (cf. 26.15), not whether the message is true or false. Thus, the mention of truth (אמת) in 28.9 does not describe true *prophets* but true *authority*, underscoring the significance of the motif in Jeremiah. The mention of ‘truth’ (אמת) in 28.9 has reinforced the traditional contrast of salvation versus doom, as well as the implication that certain prophets could be ‘false’ according to the criterion set forth in Deut 18.20–22.⁸⁰² However, the differences between these texts are greater than is often assumed,⁸⁰³ and recent schol-

⁷⁹⁸ On the prophetic *Sendungsbewusstsein*, see Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 182–97; Huffmon, *Company of Prophets*; Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 221–24.

⁷⁹⁹ Jer 1.7; 7.25; 14.14, 15; 23.21, 32; 25.4; 27.15; 28.9, 15; 29.9, 19; 35.15; 37.3, 7, 17; 38.14; 42.5; 44.4.

⁸⁰⁰ The connection to Deuteronomy here is more problematic than is often assumed. See Schmidt, *Jeremiah 1–20*, 47–48; Nicholson, *Deuteronomy 18:9–22*, 154–55. Cf. Achenbach, “Prophet like Moses”, 446; Römer, *Comment distinguer ?*, 117.

⁸⁰¹ See note 734 on page 187.

⁸⁰² Lange, *Vom prophetischen Wort zur prophetischen Tradition*, 84–85; Schmitt, *Mantik im Alten Testament*, 130; Smelik, *A Prophet Context*, 255–56.

⁸⁰³ Sharp, *Prophecy and Ideology in Jeremiah*, 152–53; Jong, *Fallacy of “True and False”*, 11–13.

arship views the concept of ‘false’ prophecy is based on a fallacy.⁸⁰⁴ Neither the prophet nor his message are connected to the concept of truth in 28.9. Instead, it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9,

1.4. Prophets, priests and cult

General similarities between priests and prophets have long been recognised by scholars,⁸⁰⁵ but the nature of their relationship remains debated. As a result of this investigation, several factors lead to the conclusion that they are closely related. Prophets and priests are criticised in the same terms, with similar language, metaphors and conceptual themes (e.g. Jer 23.9–15). The semantic fields of worship and religious service (אהב *qal*, בטח *hiphil*, חוה *hishtaphel*, עבד *qal*, פנה *qal*, שוב *hiphil*, שמע *hiphil*), and of purity or integrity (חנף *qal*, שים *qal*, תעה *hiphil*) are associated with the lexeme נביא in Jeremiah. Critical passages demonstrate that the כהן and נביא are associated with shared concerns for the ‘proper conventions for worshipping YHWH’.⁸⁰⁶ The implicit assumption of these criticisms is that the prophets, together with the priests, have failed in their expected functions.⁸⁰⁷ Furthermore, their activities and functions overlap, as both prophets and priests are involved in the same processes of divinatory inquiry.

In semantic terms, the paradigmatic relationships between מלך and שר and between כהן and נביא are interrelated and follow a pattern: as מלך relates to שר, so כהן relates to נביא. The closest word to נביא, in terms of consistency and frequency of association, is כהן, and the two are used together as a ‘word pair’. This is a major conclusion. It is a semantic piece of evidence which suggests that the נביא and כהן are both related to the same domain of activity, particularly the cult.⁸⁰⁸ In a similar fashion, Tiemeyer has called the prophet and priest pair a ‘merism’; this investigation would support the claim, and I

⁸⁰⁴ Nissinen, *Die Relevanz der neuassyrischen Prophetie*, 251; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”.

⁸⁰⁵ See, e.g., Haldar, *Associations of Cult Prophets*; Tilson, *False Prophets in the Old Testament*, 427; Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 286–95; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 112–13.

⁸⁰⁶ Zevit, *Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis*, 192.

⁸⁰⁷ Tiemeyer observes that the priests are not criticised in Jeremiah apart from the prophets. Tiemeyer, *Priests and the Temple Cult*, 256–57.

⁸⁰⁸ This confirms a view already held among some scholars. See, e.g. Gonçalves, *Les « Prophètes Écrivains »*, 167; Zevit, *Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis*, 203–09; Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 29.

would agree that there is not a sharp distinction between them.⁸⁰⁹ Prophets and priests are collaborative partners.

One should be careful not to assume that this is evidence for a sociological assertion that there is a specific *type* of ‘cultic’ prophets associated with temples as professionals.⁸¹⁰ The influence of the ‘often-made dichotomy between free, charismatic prophets and the so-called cultic or court prophets’ should not be underestimated, even if it ‘should no longer be upheld as a fundamental, generally applicable distinction’.⁸¹¹ For example, the debate over whether prophets had a special intercessory role rooted in the cult, as Thelle has shown, obscures the larger patterns of prayer and intercession in the Hebrew Bible.⁸¹² The ‘false prophecy’ debate has often supposed a contrast between cultic versus non-cultic types of prophecy. In my view, the parallels between נביא and כהן suggest more than a type of prophet associated with the cult, or that together the prophet and priest could be considered ‘members of the elite’.⁸¹³ Instead, particularly on the basis of the semantic data, I prefer to say that the כהן and נביא seem to share similar *functions* and *concerns* related to worship and service rendered to YHWH, and ascertaining his will.

1.5. Salvation and doom

In Jeremiah’s commission as a נביא in Jer 1.4–10, prophecy is construed as both positive and negative, and the text does not authorise one kind of prophetic message over another.⁸¹⁴ In the ‘false prophecy’ debate, however, the critically important text of 28.8–9 has been understood to contrast two distinct types of prophecy: salvation and doom.⁸¹⁵ This

⁸⁰⁹ Tiemeyer, *Priests and the Temple Cult*, 234. See also Halдар, *Associations of Cult Prophets*; Tilson, *False Prophets in the Old Testament*, 427; Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 286–95; Grabbe, *Priests, Prophets, Diviners, Sages*, 112–13.

⁸¹⁰ Against the views found, e.g., in Jeremias, נביא, THAT II, 10; Bergman, Ringgren, and Dommershausen, כהן, ThWAT IV, 77–78.

⁸¹¹ Nissinen, *What is Prophecy?*, 23.

⁸¹² Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*, 109–20; Boer, *De voorbede in het Oude Testament*; Hesse, *Die Fürbitte im Alten Testament*; Thelle, *Ask God*, 117–19. In some studies, the idea of a particular intercessory ‘office’ is connected to a cultic office or role. See, e.g., Reventlow, *Liturgie und prophetisches Ich*; Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*.

⁸¹³ Stökl, נביא/נביאה, SAHD, §5, A.3, §7. Compare this with his claim that ‘[t]he נביא seems to have been an official, professional prophet.’ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 200.

⁸¹⁴ Schmidt refers to the authorisation as ‘situationsübergreifend wie allgemeingrundsätzlich’. Schmidt, *Jeremia 1–20*, 49–50. Cf. Jong, *Fallacy of “True and False”*, 29.

⁸¹⁵ See note 734 on page 187.

reading was driven in part by the classic scholarly construct of prophecy, likening the Israelite prophets to Protestant reformers. Scholars tended to prefer oracles of doom as more authentic to the Israelite prophetic tradition,⁸¹⁶ but this tendency has changed drastically.⁸¹⁷ In a fundamental sense, stressed by the view that prophecy is a form of divination, ‘salvation’ and ‘doom’ are less rigid categories than previously thought.⁸¹⁸

Several of the conclusions of my investigation of Jer 28.8–9 support this change in perspective. Together with the updated critical paradigm of prophecy, two conclusions from the semantic analysis of the verb **נבא** are critical pieces of evidence. First, the verb **נבא** does not often take a direct object. In most cases, then, one does not prophesy things so much as one prophesies about, with or concerning things. The construction **נבא ל־** in 28.8 (cf. **נבא את־** in 20.1) has a dative sense, meaning ‘to’ in reference to a person and ‘concerning’ in reference to a concept or idea. Similarly, the combinations of verb **נבא** *niphal* with **אל** and **על** express the same basic sense of prophesying in relation to something; one should not construe **על** as negative.⁸¹⁹ The claim in 28.8–9 is that prophets from ages past have prophesied *about* war (**מלחמה**), disaster (**רעה**) and pestilence (**דבר**) on behalf of ‘many lands’ and ‘great kingdoms’. This recalls Jeremiah’s commission as a **נביא לגוים** in 1.4–10, where prophecy relates to nations (**גוים**), kingdoms (**ממלכות**) and tribes (**משפחות**), as well as war and siege (1.11–14; 15–19). Therefore, the statement in 28.8–9 does not concern prophetic *predictions* of war and peace. Rather, the claim is that prophets have been especially active in times of crisis.⁸²⁰ Jer 28.8–9 should no longer be cited as evidence for different ‘types’ of prophets.

⁸¹⁶ Wolff, Hauptprobleme alttestamentlicher Prophetie, 465; Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*; Jeremias, Vollmacht des Propheten; Vogels, Comment discerner le prophète authentique ?, 689–91.

⁸¹⁷ See, e.g., Kratz, Neue in der Prophetie; Jong, *Isaiah*; Blum, Israels Prophetie im altorientalischen Kontext; Jong, Biblical Prophecy—A Scribal Enterprise; Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, 273–300, cit. 283.

⁸¹⁸ See Barstad, Sic dicit dominus; Jong, *Isaiah*, 311–13; Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 16–19; Williamson, Prophet of Weal or Woe?, 285.

⁸¹⁹ See IBHS §11.2.2a (**אל**) and §11.2.13a–g (**על**).

⁸²⁰ This accords with Nissinen’s description of divination as ‘a method of tackling the anxiety about the insecurity of life and coping with the risk brought about human ignorance.’ Thus the diviner, ‘by virtue of their background, education, or behavior’ is able to gain access to super-human knowledge that is sufficient for alleviating this anxiety.’ Nissinen, Prophecy and Omen Divination, 341. This reading avoids what Cryer called ‘the silly—but widely held—belief that divination has to do with “predicting the future.”’ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 122, see also n. 1.

1.6. Legitimacy and authority

A red thread which runs between the three texts of Jer 1.4–19, 23.9–40 and 27.1–28.17 is a concern for prophetic legitimacy. Too often, biographical readings locate the authority or legitimacy of a prophet in their personal qualities, even in purely ‘literary’ constructs of biography:⁸²¹ cultic critiques of unfaithfulness toward YHWH are read as indictments of moral character;⁸²² the divine council is borne out of ‘intimacy with YHWH’ that is proven in personal conduct;⁸²³ an encouragement to pray is mockingly ironic.⁸²⁴ Claims such as these miss the point. Good people can give bad advice, and the pious can be naïve. Also, especially in the ancient world, it would be a risky enterprise to take the word of an up-standing individual against the advice of trusted institutions. In reality, human decision-making is a complex enterprise and the prophets, as diviners, were a part of a complex social and cultural fabric that viewed the divine realm as an important source of knowledge.⁸²⁵ Prophets appealed to a variety of means by which they could claim trustworthiness; the important first step is to at least recognise that they felt the need to do so, and the second is to identify the patterns of these appeals.

Nearly every aspect of 1.4–10 is directly related to the issue of legitimacy: divine support from the womb (1.5); Jeremiah’s low rank as a נַעַר (1.6); being ‘sent’ and ‘commanded’ to go and speak on YHWH’s behalf (1.7); the encouraging expression to ‘fear not’ and reassurance (1.8; cf. 1.19); YHWH placing his word in Jeremiah’s mouth (1.9); being ‘appointed’ (פָּקַד *hiphil*) to a position of authority (1.10). Two visions portray Jeremiah as an effective prophet in 1.11–14 (cf. הִיטַבַּת לְרֵאוֹת in 1.12). In the face of opposition, Jeremiah will be a fortress resistant to attack (1.18).

Criticisms in Jer 23.9–15 point to the failures of prophets and priests to fulfil their cultic obligations. In 23.16–22, the concepts of being sent (שָׁלַח), commanded (צִוָּה) and spoken to (דִּבֶּר) in 23.16–22 follow the pattern of ancient Near Eastern conception of prophecy. These ideas are conceptually related to legitimacy as they claim authorisation for a prophet to speak on behalf of the deity. Similarly, the use of visions in a cooperative

⁸²¹ For example, Fischer, *Jeremia* 1–25, 143.

⁸²² Epp-Tiessen, *Concerning the Prophets*, 206.

⁸²³ Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment*, 74, 81.

⁸²⁴ Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 21–36, 322.

⁸²⁵ Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel*, 121–22.

relationship with speech function to legitimate prophetic speech (cf. 1.11–14). The references to the divine council in 23.18, 22 are concerned with prophetic legitimacy; there is good reason to read this as another reference to visionary experience underwriting a prophetic message with greater authority.

In distinction to their divinatory colleagues, prophets who speak in YHWH's name are accused of not being sent in Jer 27.15 (cf. 27.9, 14). Given the shared language in 27.10 and 27.15, it seems clear that the motif of 'being sent' is specially reserved for diviners who are called a נביא. Jeremiah's general statement on prophecy in 28.8–9 highlights the motif of being sent; it is prophetic authorisation and legitimacy that is at stake in 28.9, as אמת modifies the thematic verb שלח. The prophet who is 'sent' can be relied on for good advice.

2. Contributions to research

In addition to the contributions to the so-called 'false prophecy' debate outlined above, a few aspects of this investigation concern other debates concerning prophecy. I have selected two which are closely related to the themes of this work: (1) the definition of נביא; and (2) cultic prophecy.

2.1. Definition of נביא

According to the etymological view, the lexeme נביא derives from Akkadian *nabû* and should be understood as 'one who is called'. Two aspects of this claim are questionable in light of this investigation. First, there is little data in the Hebrew Bible that makes use of this sense of 'call'. In Jeremiah, prophet's commission or claim to legitimacy is never described with קרא but always with שלח or צוה. Similarly, the active meaning supported by Fleming, 'one who calls', only finds marginal support. In 1 Kgs 18.26, the prophets of Baal call on the name of Baal with the expectation that they will summon his presence (cf. 1 Kgs 18.29), and in 2 Kgs 5.11, Elisha is expected to call upon the name of YHWH in order to heal someone's sickness. Fleming suggests that the biblical portrait emphasises the 'divine initiative in prophecy', and rejects messages that 'come from the prophet's own mind (see, e.g., Ezek 13:17)'; so, he concludes that the active sense of נביא is 'unconsciously displayed'

in the ‘activity of illegitimate prophets’.⁸²⁶ Not only is this speculative, but it’s basic argument dresses the evolutionary paradigm of ‘primitive’ and ‘classical’ prophecy in etymological garb. In a similar vein, Mullen, claims that the sense of נביא as ‘one who is called’ is evident in the prophet’s participation in the divine council, ‘for the prophet was called to proclaim the will of the deity which was issued from the assembly’.⁸²⁷ At the end of his etymological discussion, Stökl admits that there is ‘no indication that Israelites or Judeans would have understood it to mean anything else but simply “prophet” in the post-exilic period’.⁸²⁸

It is far more productive to explore the semantic relations of the lexeme נביא in order to define it. From a semantic perspective, as I have outlined it in Jeremiah, it is more informative to say that נביא and כהן are semantically related, that נביא is strongly associated with communication, worship and religious service. From these observations, one can then proceed to describe and explain the construct of prophecy and what it means to be a נביא. I am afraid that the seminal views of Barr are too often acknowledged but passed over in discussions of the meaning of נביא. Therefore my appraisal of the value of the etymological definition of נביא as ‘one who is called’, outside of purely historical discussions of language use, is largely negative.

2.2. Cultic prophecy

What relationship did prophecy have to other established institutions in ancient Israel? This continues to be one of the driving questions in research on prophets. Organised worship, as practiced in rituals and sacral locations, is one such institution that has attracted significant attention in modern scholarship.⁸²⁹ ‘Cultic prophecy’, a term for prophetic activity which was practiced in cultic or liturgical settings, has been the subject of much debate since the early 20th century. Strongly influenced by form-criticism, the debate arose largely from the recognition that aspects of the psalms closely resembled prophetic speech.⁸³⁰ Because the psalter is thought to reflect the cultic practices of ancient Israel,

⁸²⁶ Fleming, *Etymological Origins of the Hebrew nabi*, 223.

⁸²⁷ Mullen, *Divine Council*, 216.

⁸²⁸ Stökl, *Prophecy in the Ancient Near East*, 167.

⁸²⁹ Blenkinsopp, *History of Prophecy*, 22-25. For much of the following, I have found Hilber’s review of scholarship to be very helpful; see Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 1-39.

⁸³⁰ Gunkel and Mowinkel represent the major positions in the early debates on this topic. Gunkel

the presence of prophetic speech in the psalms suggests, by extension, that prophets were involved cultic practices along with other religious functionaries.

Gunkel, saw the ‘prophetic speech’ of the psalter as essentially imitative; speech-forms of prophetic proclamation made their way into cultic practice by means of shared eschatological theology, which were then articulated by priests in the cultic ritual.⁸³¹ Mowinckel, in contrast, asserted that these psalms originated in speech by prophets in cultic contexts and were later adopted into the psalter from the cult.⁸³² For the most part, the debate is roughly divided between supporters of the views of Gunkel and Mowinckel.⁸³³

Part of the disagreement between Gunkel and Mowinckel, as Hilber notes, regarded their differing perspectives on how prophecy is defined. While Mowinckel thought anyone who was able to provide answers to inquiries concerning the divine will,⁸³⁴ Gunkel thought that because this definition was so broad, it ‘created a space in the cult for prophets where none actually exists.’⁸³⁵ However, as Barton points out, the notion of ‘cult’ is part of the problem in these discussions. Scholars operate with such a variety of festivals, liturgies, rituals and celebrations in their conceptions of the cult that it becomes difficult to know what it is prophets are associated with in the debate.⁸³⁶

⁸³¹ Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, zu Ende geführt von J. Begrich, 4. Auflage, Göttingen, 1985, 330, 346-47, 373-74. In general agreement with Gunkel’s position, see, e.g., Rowley, *Nature of Prophecy*, *HThR* 38 (1945), 1-38; Quell, *Wahre und falsche Propheten*, 51-52; Spieckermann, *Rede Gottes und Wort Gottes*, in: *Neue Wege der Psalmenforschung*, ed. Seybold and Zenger, HBS 1, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1994, 157-73; Hossfeld, *Das Prophetische in den Psalmen*, in: *Ich bewirke das Heil und erschaffe das Unheil (Jesaja 45, 7)*, ed. Diedrich and Willmes, FzB 88, Würzburg, 1998, 223-43. As Hilber notes, part of how Gunkel and Begrich ruled out prophets from being the speakers of these statements in the cultic liturgy is that their “free inspiration of the moment” (as well as ecstatic behaviour) would preclude them from participating in the more fixed, ritual forms of the cult.’ Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 8.

⁸³² Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, II, SVSK.HF 1921/6, Kristiania, 1922, 2-4. See also Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, III, SVSK.HF 1922/1, Kristiania, 1923, 4-29. In general agreement with Mowinckel’s position, see, e.g., Rad, *Die falschen Propheten*, 113-17; Plöger, *Priester und Prophet*; Johnson, *Cultic Prophet*, revised ed., Cardiff, 1962; Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 78-83; Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, 94-100; Jeremias, *Kultprophetie und Gerichtsverkündigung*, 1-10.

⁸³³ A third perspective, outlined by Gillingham, shifts the discussion to the post-exilic period; while there is little evidence of oracular material in the psalter, and it is mostly ‘indirect, future-orientated, didactic’, the psalter is received in the post-exilic period as ‘words now imbibed with a prophetic spirit’ fulfilled in the present. Gillingham, *New Wine and Old Wineskins*, in: *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel*, ed. Day, LHBOTS 531, London, 2010, 370-90. Examples of this perspective include Spieckermann, *Rede Gottes und Wort Gottes*; Hossfeld, *Das Prophetische in den Psalmen*.

⁸³⁴ Mowinckel, *Psalmstudien*, II, 5.

⁸³⁵ Quotation from Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 7. For Gunkel’s views, see Gunkel, *Einleitung in die Psalmen*, 368-74, esp. 371-72.

⁸³⁶ Barton, *Prophets and the Cult*, in: *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. Day, LHBOTS 422, London,

One particular issue in the cultic prophecy debate concerns the relationship between priests and prophets. The results of my analysis may prove useful to this debate insofar as it confirms the close association between **נביא** and **כהן**. Both of these terms are related to the same domain of activity, and appear to function together as collaborative partners. The shared conceptual themes and semantic domains of the two terms, as well as implicit assumption in critical contexts that the **כהן** and **נביא** share concerns for the regulation of the cult,⁸³⁷ suggests that it is highly likely that prophecy and cult are closely related. My conclusions follow those of Hilber when he notes that in Jeremiah there is a great deal of cooperation between prophets and priests that suggests the cult is their shared domain (e.g. Jer 20.1–6; 23.11, 33–40; 29.26; 35.4). In his view, ‘evidence favours the existence of cult prophets who contributed to worship and were not merely using the occasion of a religious gathering to proclaim a message outside of the text of the liturgy.’⁸³⁸ However, rather than use the term cultic prophecy de Jong prefers to ‘simply call it prophecy, since in historical terms prophecy was always somehow related to the cult.’⁸³⁹ The findings of this investigation, I think, support the view of de Jong better than that of Hilber. The importance of the cult for prophecy in Jeremiah should not be underestimated.

3. Summary

Over the course of this study I have referred to the study of prophecy in Jeremiah in terms of a conversation, a series of ‘things we talk about’. Not only is the scholarly conversation rich in perspectives, but so also is the text of Jeremiah. Prophecy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon in both literary and social form. In bringing these two constructs together and drawing on each in order to explain the nature of prophecy in Jeremiah, I have contributed to a series of long-standing debates in a new way. As a contribution to the modern-day, critical discourse on prophecy, it is my hope that this work will help to keep the conversation going.

2005, 308–41. Another complication is the fact that categories of ‘cultic’ and ‘royal’ are often blurred in the *Weltanschauung* of ancient texts, which means that it is also difficult to differentiate between prophetic functions in temples against those in royal courts. See, e.g., Hilber, Royal Cultic Prophecy, in: *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela*, ed. Barstad and Gordon, Winona Lake, IN, 2013, 161–86.

⁸³⁷ Zevit, Prophet versus Priest Antagonism Hypothesis, 192.

⁸³⁸ Hilber, *Cultic Prophecy in the Psalms*, 29.

⁸³⁹ Jong, Fallacy of “True and False”, 17. See also Jong, *Isaiah*, 294–98.

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